

2025

DEMA

The Diving Equipment
and Marketing Association

ANNUAL REPORT

BRINGING BUSINESSES TOGETHER TO GROW THE DIVING INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE

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WHAT IS DEMA?

The Diving Equipment and Marketing Association is a non-profit trade association. More than that, DEMA is a community of professionals working together and sharing what they know. DEMA provides members and the Industry with tangible benefits that are funded by earnings from the Industry’s participation in the annual DEMA Show, sponsorships, and from DEMA membership dues. Importantly, DEMA channels earnings BACK INTO the Diving Industry, producing industry research, guiding legislation and regulatory issues to help the industry, developing marketing and PR programs, and more, all for the benefit of DEMA Members.

DESCRIPTION

DEMA is the trade association for the international scuba diving industry. With more than 1,400 members, DEMA’s mission is: **Bringing Businesses Together to Grow the Diving Industry worldwide**

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Build a community among DEMA Members with a culture and environment that will produce valued relationships.
2. Create worthwhile opportunities for DEMA Members to share and exchange information and knowledge.
3. Provide learning opportunities that are responsive to DEMA Member needs and relevant to the changing dynamics of the Diving Industry.
4. Be at the forefront of addressing the legislative and regulatory initiatives that affect the Recreational Diving Industry.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. **Engagement:** To provide a community culture in the Diving Industry through personal interaction.
2. **Industry Practices:** To model and

foster an inclusive culture within the Diving Industry by sharing useful and successful practices originating from DEMA Members and the Industry.

3. **Innovation:** To create and deliver new value for DEMA Members.
4. **Education:** Through a culture of engagement, provide relevant professional development along the continuum of careers and activities within the diving community.
5. **Resources:** To serve as a resource for the Diving Industry, including:
 - Sharing useful and successful business and management practices
 - Industry Research
 - Appropriate Standards
 - Creating opportunities for the DEMA community to advance personally and professionally through collaboration

TACTICAL GOALS:

1. Produce an annual trade event for the industry which serves the needs of its stakeholders and produces a successful financial outcome for the association.
2. Engage in marketing programs that promote non-commercial diving of all kinds, create new customers of all ages, drive consumers into retail stores and resorts, and promote customer retention.
3. Dedicate resources to preventing potential legislation which could adversely affect the industry.
4. Engage in marketing research programs which will:
 - Define the universe of divers.
 - Determine the rate of erosion among existing divers.
 - Determine the number of entry-level scuba certifications that take place in the United States and the Caribbean each year.
 - Seek opportunities to obtain global data on diver certification and participation.
 - Provide retail operational data.

5. Engage in activities that promote the health of aquatic resources while protecting diver access to those resources.

COMMITTEES:

Committees are made up of Members and may include Board members or other DEMA Member volunteers from within the Diving Industry. These committees are advisory to the Board of Directors and DEMA Staff and bring a wealth of experience to the Association. In practice, those designated as “Board Committees” are chaired by DEMA board members, while Program Committees can be chaired by members who are not directors. Committee Chairs must be the voting representative of their DEMA-member company.

Committees help to provide input to the DEMA Board of Directors and Staff. Having opinions and insight from the diving community is critical, and the learning curve works both ways; many volunteers learn the inner workings of a non-profit business and trade association, including the nuances and challenges of providing the best services and promotions that meet the needs of all five stakeholder groups simultaneously.

DEMA’s 2025 committee list appears in this report under Member Engagement. DEMA Member companies with an interest in serving on future committees should contact Alicia Stone at alicia@dema.org.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

In 2025, DEMA took preliminary steps to review its strategic position in the industry once again, including soliciting input from the DEMA Board of Directors on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that DEMA and the Diving Industry face.

Input from the Board was helpful and will be used by the Board going forward as DEMA considers next steps to ensure the organization and the industry are well served and can provide benefits to DEMA Members.

THE 2025 DEMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
<u>A1-Manufacturing</u> • Mike Hollis, Pro Asia • Tom Phillipp, XS Scuba, Inc.	<u>A2-Diver Certification and Training Agencies</u> • Tom Leaird, Scuba Educators International • Jeff Mondle, PADI Americas
<u>A3-Dive Consulting, Media, Non-Retail Service Providers, and Publishing</u> • William Cline, Cline Group Advertising • Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting	<u>A4-Retailers</u> • Jeffrey Cinciripino, Scuba Shack Diving Services • Richard Thomas, International Scuba
<u>A5-Travel & Resorts</u> • Shana Phelan, Pura Vida Divers, LLC • Steve Weaver, Dream Weaver Travel	

2025 BOARD/STANDING COMMITTEES
<u>Executive Committee</u> • Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting, Chair • William Cline, Cline Group Advertising Inc., Board Senior Vice Chair, • Tom Phillipp, XS Scuba/Sea Pearls, Vice President • Tom Leaird, Scuba Educators International, Board Secretary/Treasurer
<u>Finance</u> • Brad Barnett, Clearly Cayman Dive Resorts • Mike Hollis, Pro Asia • Tom Leaird (Board Treasurer, Chair), Scuba Educators International • Tim Webb, Caradonna Dive Adventures
<u>Manufacturing</u> • Charlie Bush, Sherwood Scuba • Patrick Danko, Garmin • Tor Ericsson, Diving Unlimited International • Mike Hollis (Chair), Pro Asia • Tom Phillipp, XS Scuba/Sea Pearls

DEMA’s full committee list appears in this report under Member Engagement. DEMA Member companies with an interest in serving on future committees should contact DEMA’s Membership Manager, Alicia Stone, at alicia@dema.org. ■





MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

WHY BECOME A DEMA MEMBER?

Why become part of any association? Aside from contributing to the “greater good” of your Industry, the decision to become a DEMA Member extends far beyond transactional benefits—it is a strategic investment in the future of your business, your professional community, and the industry at large. Amid shifting economic conditions and evolving market dynamics, collaboration among stakeholders is more critical than ever. DEMA provides the infrastructure for this collaboration, bringing together diverse business segments to address industry and business challenges and drive industry-wide advancement.

DEMA recognizes that the most successful businesses and professionals:

- Become part of the diving community through networking and communication, supporting a culture and environment that produces valued business and personal relationships.

- Share and exchange information and knowledge within the Community.
- Learn more about running a diving business through education and experience programs that are responsive to changing business needs and relevant to the dynamics of the Diving Industry.
- Participate in legislative and regulatory initiatives that promote a better environment while positively impacting their business.

These are among DEMA’s strategic goals—the very strategies and objectives that help fuel business and personal growth. While a DEMA membership also provides businesses with access to direct benefits in terms of [products and services](#), DEMA most importantly helps businesses and professional members move along the path of success, both individually and collectively, to create a stronger diving community.

COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION

The recreational diving community comprises thousands of professionals, including business owners, employees, contractors, instructors, diving leaders, and others, who learn from each other through a variety of resources. One of the best opportunities to do so is the annual DEMA Show, which includes hundreds of hours of educational and networking opportunities.

During DEMA Show, the DEMA Association sponsors professional development on a variety of topics, but just as necessary are the chances to learn face-to-face from other companies in the industry, those who exhibit and provide professional education directly related to their own products and services.

Networking is more than just meeting at the bar after Show hours. It involves “engagement” with the activities that are beneficial for your business and personal growth. People and organizations (including DEMA) learn by listening to others.

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

One thing we have learned over the past couple of years is that community and learning to lean on one another are vital during trying times. With the help of its members, DEMA helps the victims of catastrophic storms and other occurrences with the DEMA Disaster Assistance Program; “Members Helping Members,” building a bridge of assistance for those affected by these disasters while permanent aid is being requested from the appropriate government, private, or public agencies.

The MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS Program may provide any or all of these types of *Disaster Assistance:

1. Exhibitor Assistance: Designed for companies exhibiting at the DEMA Show, each company involved from specific affected regions may apply for funds to help them attend the trade

show, where promotional opportunities can aid in their return to operation. Affected companies will apply for the assistance funds through the DEMA office, and funds will be awarded to companies exhibiting at the show.

2. Attendee Assistance Program: Designed for Registered DEMA Show buyers staying in the DEMA hotel room block, attendees can receive a complimentary one-night hotel stay (based on the base rate only, excluding tax and service fees). When available, this program is limited to one buyer per retail store and is only applicable to reservations made within DEMA’s hotel block. Attendees from affected retail stores will have two weeks to submit receipts following the show for reimbursement.

**In general, a “Disaster” will be defined as any event that is declared such by an involved government entity. Applications for assistance will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.*

ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF THE DIVING COMMUNITY

Participating in DEMA’s advocacy efforts provides ample opportunity to engage with others, listen to and present various sides of an argument (knowing that there are rarely only two sides), and achieve a satisfactory outcome for your business, your personal growth, and the industry. DEMA continues to take an active leadership role in public policy issues impacting the industry and encourages all members and non-members alike to get involved.

From personal testimony to message-writing campaigns directly to lawmakers, public policy efforts tie us together and make individual company efforts far more effective. Importantly, the voice DEMA brings to the legislative table through DEMA Members makes a difference to the environment and the regulatory situation, keeping dive sites protected and accessible to the diving community.



For complete details of DEMA’s recent efforts, visit the Public Policy section of this report and subscribe to DEMA’s Public Policy Digest.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Each year, DEMA relies on its member volunteers to keep essential committees and activities moving. DEMA invites all volunteers to attend the DEMA Membership Meeting on Wednesday, November 12th, at 8:00 AM ET to be recognized for their hard work during the year. We salute all volunteers and their efforts to help grow the diving industry by working together.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting, Chair
- William Cline, Cline Group Advertising Inc., Board Senior Vice Chair
- Tom Phillipp, XS Scuba/Sea Pearls, Vice President
- Tom Leaird, Scuba Educators International, Board Secretary/Treasurer

FINANCE

- Brad Barnett, Clearly Cayman Dive Resorts
- Mike Hollis, Pro Asia
- Tom Leaird (Board Treasurer, Chair), Scuba Educators International
- Tim Webb, Caradonna Dive Adventures

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Jenny Collister, Reef and Rainforest
- Derik Crotts, Professional Scuba Schools (PSS)
- Terry Cummins, TC-IBC Consulting
- Cassandra Johnson, Breezeway Bubbles Scuba
- Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting
- Arlindo Serrao, Portugal Dive
- Peter Symes (Chair), X-Ray Magazine
- Steve Weaver, Dream Weaver Travel

MANUFACTURING

- Charlie Bush, Sherwood Scuba
- Patrick Danko, Garmin
- Tor Ericsson, Diving Unlimited International
- Mike Hollis (Chair), Pro Asia
- Tom Phillipp, XS Scuba/Sea Pearls

NOMINATIONS

- William Cline, Cline Group Advertising Inc.
- Tom Leaird, Scuba Educators International
- Jeff Mondle, PADI Americas
- Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting
- Shana Phelan, Pura Vida Divers, LLC
- Mike Hollis, Pro Asia Richard Thomas, International Scuba
- Steve Weaver (Chair), Dream Weaver Travel

PUBLIC POLICY

- Frank Baquero, Pan Aqua Diving
- Patrick Danko, Garmin
- Jim Gunderson, Scuba Educators International
- Rob Kohl, PADI
- Tom Leaird, Scuba Educators International
- Dan Orr (Chair), Dan Orr Consulting
- Shana Phelan, Pura Vida Divers

RESEARCH

- William Cline (Chair), Cline Group Advertising, Inc.
- Ben Collins, Garmin
- JoAnn (Haack) Perry, Divers Alert Network
- Shelli Hendricks, Blue Horizons Solutions
- Jason Leggatt, Shearwater Research Inc.

- Lily Mak, Enchanted Sea Images
- Jeff Mondle, PADI
- David Prichard, Enchanted Sea Images, Inc.
- Lee Rand, Avelo

RETAILER ENGAGEMENT

- Jennetta Adams, International Scuba
- Robin Bostater, Kaizen Scuba
- Jeff Cinciripino (Chair), Scuba Shack Diving Services
- Patrick Hammer, Dive Right In Scuba
- Bob Hathaway, Odyssey Scuba & Travel, LLC
- Mitchell Heller, Tri-City Scuba
- Brooke Speedy (Co-Chair), Leaird’s Underwater Service
- Rich Thomas, International Scuba

SHOW COMMITTEE

- Hellen Armstrong, Stretch Business Solutions LLC
- Jeff Cinciripino, Scuba Shack Diving Services
- Patty Cline, Cline Group Advertising, Inc.
- Bill Cole, Sea Experience
- Jenny Collister (Chair), Reef and Rainforest
- Lily Mak, Enchanted Sea Images
- Richard Thomas, International Scuba
- Tim Webb, Caradonna Dive Adventures■



DEMA MEMBER REWARDS PROGRAM

The DEMA Rewards Program incentivizes Members to engage with DEMA to benefit their business, other members, and the diving community. Once rewards points are awarded for participation, they can be exchanged for future Membership discounts, merchandise, and much more! DEMA Members can earn rewards points while participating in the Association's programs, including:

EXHIBITING

- Exhibiting at DEMA Show
- Staying in the DEMA Hotel Block
- Sponsoring at DEMA Show
- Speaking at an Exhibitor-Sponsored Seminar
- Attending Member Meeting

ATTENDING DEMA SHOW

- Staying in the DEMA Hotel Block
- Attending in-person DEMA-Sponsored Education
- Registering more than one person for the Show
- Attending Member Meeting

VOLUNTEERING

- Serving on the Board of Directors
- Serving on a Committee or Task Force
- Micro-volunteering service

ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION

- Public Policy efforts
- Association research contributions
- Voting in DEMA Elections and Awards
- Contributing information to DEMA's surveys and other activities

MEMBERSHIP

- Early annual renewal (must pay dues by 3/31)
- Using DEMA's benefits – such as DEMA's industry research or other items
- Provide secondary contact information in your Member Profile

DEMA Members can earn a maximum of 100 DEMA Rewards points per calendar year. All points must be redeemed by June 30 of the following calendar year; after this date, they expire (redeeming company must be a current member at the time of redemption). For complete details about the program, visit www.dema.org. ■





FINANCE COMMITTEE

TOM LEAIRD, CHAIR (BOARD TREASURER)

The Finance Committee provides oversight to all budgetary activities of the Association, reviews and recommends the budget for the fiscal year, and reviews the Association's financial transactions.

DEMA's financial standards are developed using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. In addition to following these high standards, DEMA also retains the services of an outside professional accounting firm to conduct an annual review of all the Association's financial activities, as well as periodic evaluations of financial data. The association's financials are available on www.dema.org for member review.

GIVING BACK TO THE INDUSTRY

One of the most important objectives of the Association is to reinvest money in the diving industry for business purposes. Since January 2003, DEMA has carefully invested money in successful promotions and other business-related efforts, which were then

evaluated for their return on investment using standard financial evaluation techniques.

DEMA considers funding many different projects and allocates funds to these projects, taking the following into careful consideration:

PROJECTS MANAGED DIRECTLY BY DEMA (BOARD OR STAFF)

This is the most common type of project, usually involving extensive committee and Board discussion, plans, and evaluation prior to implementation. Projects of this nature may be proposed internally or by an outside entity, but are managed by DEMA Staff with Board supervision. As such:

1. Projects are under direct control of DEMA Board
2. Project costs can be more easily evaluated and controlled

3. Project success can be more easily and accurately measured
 4. Compliance with anti-trust regulations can be more easily monitored
 5. Compliance with association objectives and corporate standards can be more easily monitored
 6. Safety risks can be mitigated more easily
- Projects managed directly by DEMA require evaluation by DEMA staff, recommendations to the Board and Board approval.

PROJECTS NOT MANAGED BY DEMA

When projects not managed directly by DEMA staff are considered for DEMA funding, the following should be considered:

1. Projects are NOT under the direct control of the DEMA Board or staff. For this reason, additional information is required before approval of funding.
2. DEMA sets limits on funding to prevent cost overruns and expects periodic reports from the project management team.
3. Clear objectives and evaluation measures must be provided by the team managing the project prior to funding.
4. Written information must be provided to DEMA regarding the individuals involved, their qualifications to conduct the project, the responsibilities of each, and the terms, limits, and conditions of the project.
5. Project proposals are reviewed by DEMA counsel prior to approval.
6. DEMA must be indemnified against losses, injuries, violations of anti-trust regulations and laws, and other issues appropriate to the project in question.
7. Projects must DIRECTLY benefit the diving industry overall.
8. Consideration should be given to DEMA member companies when appropriate.

9. Adequate liability insurance naming DEMA, staff, and directors is required and should be incorporated into any funding agreement as appropriate.
10. Approved project funds can only be disbursed after a written agreement is executed.

Projects not directly managed by DEMA require evaluation by DEMA staff, and in some cases, may also require evaluation by outside sources. Such evaluation by outside sources may involve additional cost to the team proposing the project prior to recommendations being given to the Board and prior to the necessary Board approval.

DEMA ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Pursuant to the Bylaws of the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA), you are hereby notified that you have the right to receive a copy of the DEMA Annual Financial Report upon request.

This Annual Report and the Balance Sheet, Income Statement, and Statement of Changes in Financial Position constitute the DEMA Annual Financial Report. As Treasurer, I hereby certify that those accompanying documents were prepared from the books and records of DEMA. Financial Statements are available to DEMA members via www.dema.org, and DEMA's Annual Report is posted each year on its website.

The names and addresses of current DEMA members are located at the DEMA Office, located at 6050 Santo Road, Suite 190, San Diego, CA 92124.

In 2025, DEMA engaged in no transactions which involved more than \$50,000, or aggregating more than \$50,000, with the same person, and in which any director or officer of DEMA or any holder of more than 10% of the voting power of DEMA had a direct or indirect financial interest.

In 2025, DEMA paid no loans, guaranties, indemnifications, or advances to any officer or director of DEMA. ■



NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

STEVE WEAVER, CHAIR

The job of the DEMA Board Nominations Committee is to research qualified industry professionals who may be interested in serving on the DEMA Board of Directors and recommend them as Board Candidates for election by the DEMA Membership. By researching and recommending qualified and competent individuals, the Nominations Committee helps bring the best in leadership and governance to the association.

The [DEMA Bylaws](#) indicate that the designated representative of any Regular Class A Member company in good standing has the right to hold a seat on the DEMA Board of Directors. The task of the Nominations Committee is to find the best *Applicants and **Candidates for Board service. A Nominations Committee that researches and recommends the most qualified *Applicants and **Candidates will help ensure that the association is well-governed and well-led.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The DEMA Nominations Committee is comprised of the five DEMA Board members whose terms are not expiring in the current election year. Additional Committee members can be chosen from among Board members who are not running for re-election, as well as from the voting delegates of the DEMA membership. However, all Committee members must be from DEMA Member companies that have been renewed for the current year.

The 2025 Nomination Committee includes:

- William Cline
- Mike Hollis
- Tom Leaird
- Jeff Mondle
- Dan Orr
- Shana Phelan
- Richard Thomas
- Steve Weaver, Chair

DEFINITIONS

- ***Applicant** – An individual expressing interest in running for the DEMA Board, who has also completed the requirements for consideration by the Nominations Committee. Individuals under consideration are reviewed on a variety of topics, including qualifications, interest, current membership, availability, and commitment to Board service. Applicants receive a questionnaire from the Nominations Committee and are evaluated based on the criteria outlined in this document.
- ****Candidate** – Individuals who have met the criteria for Board Applicant and who are recommended by this Committee to the current DEMA Board for further consideration.
- **Nominees** – Candidates who have completed all requirements and are approved by the DEMA Board to participate in the competitive Board election process.

ELECTION PROCESS

The DEMA Elections process is a crucial one, requiring the Nominations Committee, Applicants, Candidates, and Nominees to consider the ramifications for DEMA and the diving industry. This year's Nominations Committee has been successful in selecting Candidates for Board recommendation and is pleased to announce the following slate for the 2026-2028 DEMA Board of Directors election:

Category A1: Manufacturers and Distributors of Diving Equipment

- Patrick Danko, Garmin
- Richard Vaughn, Shearwater

Category A2: Diver Certification and Training Agencies

- Sabatino Bianco, RAID USA
- Jim Gunderson, Scuba Educators International
- JoAnn (Haack) Perry, Divers Alert Network

Category A3: Diving Publications, Media, Diving Industry Consultants, Associations, and Non-retail Service Providers

- Jeffrey Bozanic, Next Generation Services
- Jeff Cinciripino, Scuba Educational Alliance of Connecticut
- Peter Symes, AquaScope Media

Category A4: Retail Distribution of Diving Goods and Services

- Patrick Hammer, Dive Right In Scuba, Inc.
- Brooke Speedy, Leaird's Underwater Service

Category A5: Dive Travel and Resorts

- Jason Belport, Clearly Cayman Dive Resorts

DEMA's 2026-2028 Board of Directors election will take place from November 11, 2025, to January 26, 2026.

All 2026 A-category DEMA Members who join by 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time on January 12, 2026, the date-of-record for this election, are eligible to vote.■



DEMA SHOW COMMITTEE

JENNY COLLISTER, CHAIR

DEMA SHOW 2025:

Watch out, Orlando – here we come! In 2025, DEMA Show will return to Orlando for the 14th time since it began in 1977. Like an old friend, Orlando is providing a warm welcome to the Show and will be the host to this year’s Member Update breakfast.

Prepare to make deep connections as the Show will provide endless possibilities for networking, doing business, and learning. Attendees have hundreds of educational opportunities at their fingertips, with activities taking place every hour and minute of the Show. Returning and improved features await, including the DEMA Show Treasure Hunt, Author’s Corner, DEMA Central, First-Time Exhibitors Center, New Product Showcase, Silent Auction, and so much more. Show attendees can use the online planner and/or the Show mobile app to plan their experience and connect with other registrants.

The DEMA Show Committee met regularly throughout 2025 to review show elements and feedback and consider ways to improve the Show



for attendees and exhibitors alike. Under the guidance of Reef and Rainforest’s Jenny Collister, Chair, committee members Jeff Cinciripino of Scuba Shack Diving Services, Bill Cole of Sea Experience, Merial Currer of Patriot Scuba, Lily Mak of Enchanted Sea Images, Richard Thomas of International Scuba, and Tim Webb of Caradonna Dive Adventures tackled the following objectives:

- Reviewing Show Surveys for improvement opportunities
- Evaluating new engagement proposals

- Guiding the development of the 2026 Show creative
- Starting the process for location evaluation for DEMA Show 2030
- Reviewing the geopolitical climate, including travel and tariff considerations

DEMA SHOW TIMING AND LOCATION SELECTION

DEMA Show locations and timing are determined through attendee and Exhibitor surveys, as well as research on convention center and hotel availability. When evaluating and selecting the convention facilities, city, and hotels, DEMA uses Board-approved criteria, including:

- The city must have cultural or entertainment attractions and special event venues appealing to the diving professional. A variety of restaurants and other entertainment should be within a 10-minute walking distance of the host hotel/convention center.
- The Show city must be a significant airline destination for North America. The city should have a substantial number of direct flights coming into the city, with good connections from international hubs on the East and West Coasts, or itself be a hub city with substantial air lift, making the Show easily accessible to a broad audience of dive professionals.
- The city’s “Blended” labor rates must be within 10% of the median average compared to the convention industry market average for the previous five years.
- The convention facility must meet DEMA’s exhibit and meeting space requirements and be conveniently located near major hotels, an

international airport, and key city attractions.

- The convention facility must include a minimum of 30 meeting rooms in the convention center, capable of holding at least 50 to 100 people using classroom-style seating.
- First-class hotels conveniently located near the convention and exhibit facility for 9,000 to 12,000 attendees. Hotel facilities should accommodate at least 800-1,000 rooms on peak night, with approximately 5,000 total room nights required within DEMA’s block.

SUSTAINABILITY AND DEMA SHOW

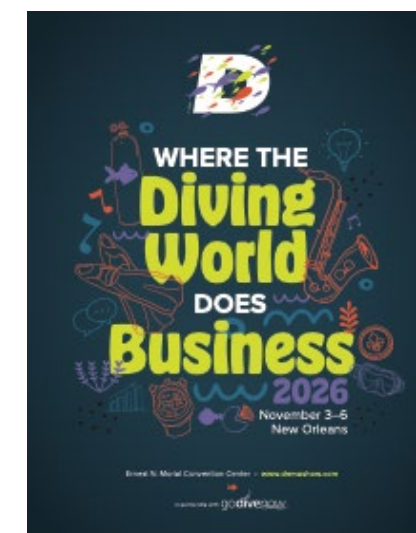
DEMA continues to select convention facilities that help ensure DEMA Show is a sustainable event.

Contracting with the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, NV; the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL; and the

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, LA is purposeful in that these convention facilities are diligent in their efforts to reduce waste and negative environmental impact.

Orlando’s Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) has one of the most innovative and large-scale sustainability programs in the United States. The OCCC has demonstrated industry and community leadership by pioneering

pathways for large venues to achieve continuously improving levels of sustainability stewardship. For complete details, visit the [OCCC website](#). ■





MANUFACTURING COMMITTEE

MIKE HOLLIS, CHAIR

The Manufacturers Committee represents all DEMA member manufacturers. Representatives on the Manufacturers Committee are drawn from the DEMA Board and may also include non-Board members.

The Manufacturers and Distributors Fund originated from a DEMA bylaws Article included when the “New DEMA” was formed in 1994. Instead of DEMA being a Manufacturers Association (The Diving Equipment Manufacturers Association), the “New DEMA” (The Diving Equipment and Marketing Association) includes five different Class A voting membership stakeholders, as well as one “Associate” (or Class B) membership for affiliated companies:

Class A Memberships:

- Class A-1 Manufacturers and Distributors of Diving Equipment

- Class A-2 Diver Certification and Training Agencies
- Class A-3 Diving Publications, Media, Diving Industry Consultants, Associations and Non-retail Service Providers
- Class A-4 Retail Distribution of Diving Goods and Services
- Class A-5 Dive Travel and Resorts

Class B Associate, Allied and Sustaining Memberships:

Associate, Allied and Sustaining Memberships: Those organizations, firms, partnerships, associations, or individuals who are ineligible for any other classes of Membership, and which subscribe to the Objects and Purposes of the Association. This class of Membership is entitled to all rights of Membership other than the right to vote and the right to hold an elected office.

The creation of the Manufacturers and Distributors Fund was part of the negotiation to transition DEMA into a vertically integrated association that encompassed all members, including five stakeholders and associate stakeholders, found within the recreational diving industry. Such a move came with the necessity for DEMA to serve the needs of all DEMA’s stakeholders, including the industry and the association itself, instead of confining benefits to any one stakeholder group.

FUND AMOUNT

The Manufacturers and Distributors Fund is equal to five percent (5%) of the Association’s gross revenues derived from the trade show conducted during the previous year. The amount added to the fund varies annually, based on the success of that year’s trade show.

THE NEED FOR A MANUFACTURING COMMITTEE

The Manufacturing Fund is used for the benefit of the association, membership, and members by the Class A-1 Division of Manufacturers

and Distributors, through a committee of not less than two members which shall be appointed by the Class A-1 Division Directors, and which shall include both Class A-1 Directors. In 2025, the A1 Board Directors added three additional Committee members from the A1 community to assist in soliciting and reviewing potential funding projects.

The allocation of funds follows a Board-approved process, and the Manufacturers’ Committee has been supportive of numerous initiatives over the years.

In 2025, \$115,000 in assistance for the industry was allocated from the fund, marked for fees and expenses associated with:

- Federal Advocacy Lobbyist
- State Advocacy Lobbyist in the Top Diving States
- Various Consumer Research Projects
- DEMA Show Prop 65 Consultations■





PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

DAN ORR, CHAIR

Each year, DEMA establishes a Public Policy Committee, which includes DEMA Board members, DEMA Member volunteers, and DEMA staff. The Committee works directly with the DEMA Office to review U.S. federal and state issues, and international issues when needed. The Committee gathers input on various issues from Members of the diving community and provides commentary and data to government officials and organizations through the DEMA staff.

The 2025 Public Policy Committee has included Frank Baquero, Gravitas Ventures, LLC; Patrick Danko, Garmin; Jim Gunderson, Scuba Educators International; Rob Kohl, PADI; Tom Leaird, Scuba Educators International; Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting; Shana Phelan, Pura Vida Divers; and Bob Harris, DEMA’s Legislative Advocate in Florida.

DEMA’s Public Policy Committee engages in legislative and regulatory activities which

promote the health of aquatic resources while protecting diver access to those resources; DEMA’s Public Policy goals include keeping dive sites accessible to divers, reducing, or managing government regulation, and keeping dive locations clean and healthy. The Committee advocates for protection of the underwater environment and actively monitors federal & state legislation and government administrative activities in the U.S. and globally to help mitigate adverse legislation which may impact diving businesses, may adversely impact the diving environment, or may restrict access to dive sites.

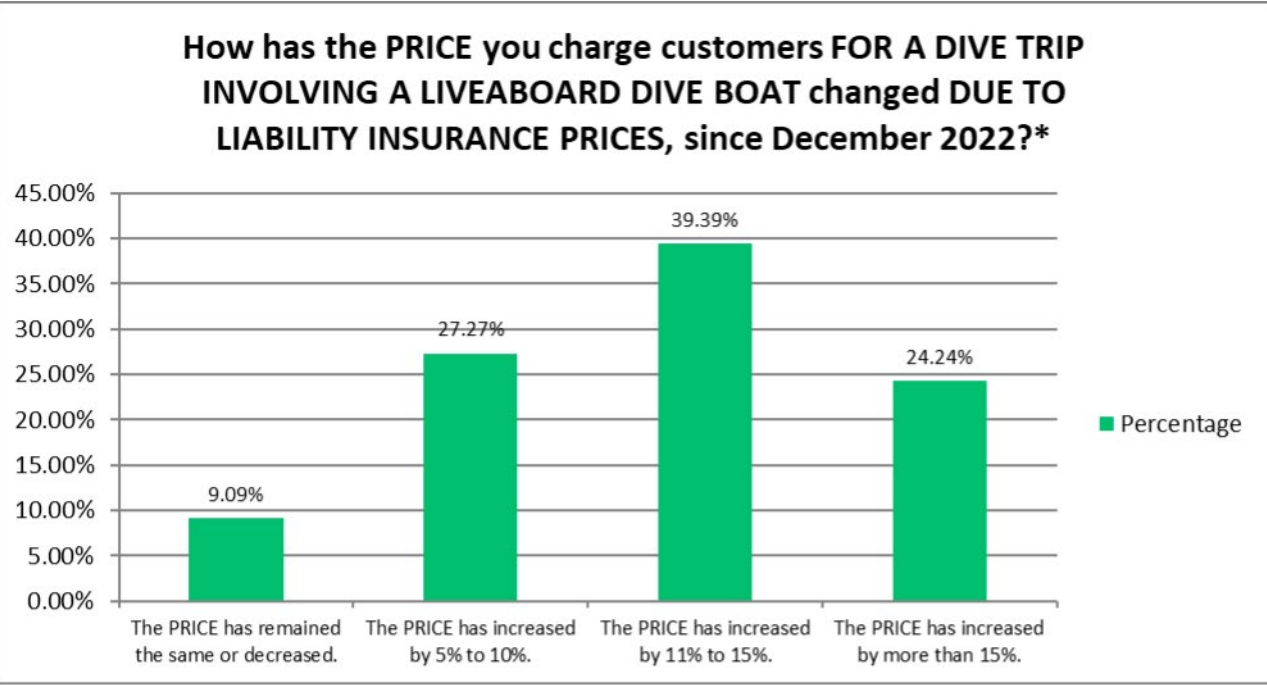
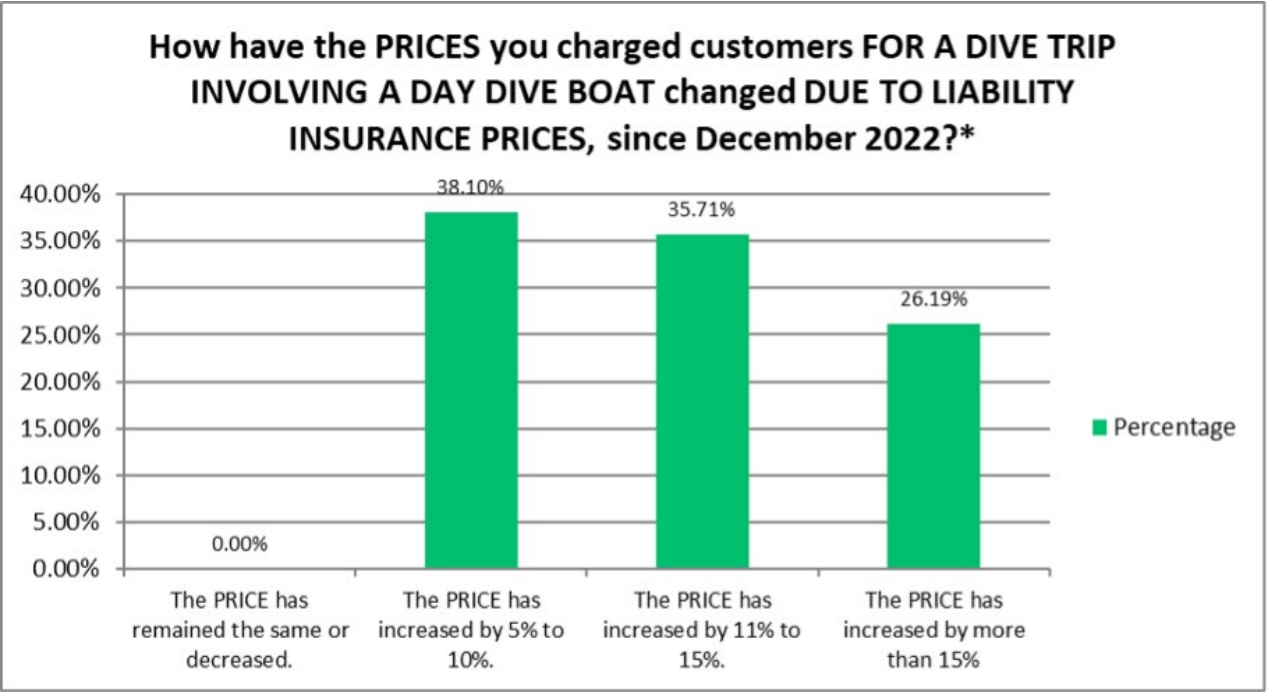
A key element of DEMA’s Public Policy work is to review advocacy issues with a global perspective; for example, if an issue in Florida could have an impact on the recreational diving industry in another country, or another U.S. state or territory, DEMA may pursue action recommended by the Committee. Legislative advocacy often requires substantial association resources (time and

money), but advocacy through DEMA’s Public Policy Committee is critical in that it provides all DEMA Members worldwide with a direct voice in the legislative and regulatory process.

PUBLIC POLICY FOCUS: THE DIVE BOAT ACT

Throughout 2025 much of DEMA’s Public Policy effort was focused on either repealing the Small

Passenger Vessel Act (SPVA) or passing the DIVE BOAT Act. As many are aware, the SPVA was enacted in 2023 as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and effectively broke the liability insurance market for the recreational diving industry in the United States. DEMA’s research* indicates that this issue has affected most U.S. dive operators but especially those booking trips on day dive boats and liveaboards.



*Confidence Level: 95% Interval: +/- 11%

As we approach the end of 2025, DEMA, with your help, continues investing considerable resources to help change this law as doing so would assist the diving industry. This issue is important for dive operations based in the U.S. but just as important for those operators outside the U.S. seeking to conduct business with U.S.-based businesses. [Click here](#) to learn more about the DIVE BOAT Act.

DEMA asks members of the U.S. diving community to tell your Senators and House Representatives to support the DIVE BOAT Act. The U.S. diving industry and DEMA will be much more successful in making this change if we come together as a community and federal elected officials hear from their constituents. Together, we CAN prevent further layoffs, help bring down insurance costs, and ease some of the domestic scuba diving pricing pressures.

Part of DEMA’s strategy has been to provide constituent letters to members of the Committees of Jurisdiction, which lets lawmakers know that their specific voters are being impacted by this important concern. One example letter from constituents signed during the 2024 DEMA Membership Meeting can be found [here](#).

We ask that you **share the DIVE BOAT Act campaign messages and graphics** with your social media followers in support of this important legislation. **Even if you’ve helped before, this MUST be an ongoing campaign if we are to bring this critical issue to these new lawmakers’ attention!**

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. [Click here](#) to **use our advocacy software to connect with your representatives** and quickly send an email (with an option to use a prewritten message).
2. We ask that you [share the campaign messages and images found here](#) with your social media followers, asking for their support of The DIVE BOAT Act.

DEMA PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

In addition to the DIVE BOAT Act actions, DEMA’s Public Policy Committee has also commented on, or monitored the following international and domestic U.S. issues having importance to the recreational diving industry:

- Enforcement of the U.S. Corporate Transparency Act Suspended
- FL Keys National Marine Sanctuary Rules Sent to FL Governor – Opposing unnecessary rules that prohibit Provisioning Ecotourism.
- The U.S. FISHES Act Passes Signed by the President
- Florida Manatees Denied Greater Endangered Species Act Protections
- The U.S. Federal Trade Commission Files Suit Against Equipment Manufacturer – Ramifications for Diving
- SS United States Starts its Journey to Become Historic Wreck
- House and Senate Bills Propose Wireless Alerts Following a Shark Attack – Lulu’s Law
- EU adopts the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive
- Canada Rules for Travel to United States – Visa Wizard
- Florida Dive in Day in Tallahassee
- Motion Granted for Summary Judgment in Prop 65 Litigation
- U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Bans Portable Chargers and Power Banks that use Lithium Batteries
- Thailand Restricts Underwater Photography by Scuba Divers
- Minnesota Dive Law

- Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow’s Workforce Act Included in U.S. Tax Package
- New Mini-Documentary Explores Sharks Making a Comeback
- How the U.S. “No Taxes On Tips” Law Could Impact You.
- Visa Bond Pilot Program Could Affect Some International Travelers to the U.S.
- Port Everglades Dredging Action

ENFORCEMENT OF THE U.S. CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY ACT SUSPENDED
Impact on Recreational Diving: Prior to enforcement of this legislation being suspended, almost all small businesses in the recreational diving industry domiciled or operating in the U.S. (including international companies) would have been required to comply with this federal reporting regulation, including a requirement for business owners and beneficiaries to provide their personal information to the U.S. federal government. WITH SUSPENSION OF ENFORCEMENT AN ADDITIONAL REGULATORY BURDEN HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM SMALL BUSINESSES.

On March 2, the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued a press release indicating that it, “will not enforce any penalties or fines associated with the beneficial ownership information reporting rule and will additionally not enforce any penalties or fines against U.S. citizens or domestic reporting companies or their beneficial owners after the forthcoming rule changes take effect.”

This change in the Department of the Treasury’s position through the Trump Administration effectively negates enforcement of the Corporate Transparency Act for domestic U.S. companies. The Department of the Treasury did indicate that it will be issuing proposed rulemaking that will “narrow the scope of the rule to foreign reporting companies only.”

For REGULAR readers of DEMA’s Public Policy Digest you know that this has been an ongoing issue since 2021, as the CTA went in and out of courts of various jurisdictions. As late as February of 2025 it was anticipated that the CTA enforcement would begin by March 21. This is no longer the case. [You can learn more about the CTA here.](#)

The U.S. Department of the Treasury [March 2 press release can be found here.](#)

FL KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY RULES SENT TO GOVERNOR – RULES UNNECESSARILY PROHIBIT PROVISIONING ECOTOURISM
Impact on Recreational Diving: DEMA has long supported National Marine Sanctuaries when science indicates the need, when they do not consider diving to be consumptive in nature, and do not restrict diver access or activities. This Sanctuary DOES create restrictions on fish feeding by divers – primarily aimed at shark photographers - but specifically allows fishers to feed and kill these same fish. DEMA continues to oppose this aspect of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary rules.

On January 16, 2025, NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries released the final rule for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Restoration Blueprint.

DEMA has long been a supporter of National Marine Sanctuaries, when the science indicates the need and when divers are not unnecessarily restricted from access or activities. DEMA has testified before the Congressional Subcommittee of jurisdiction to support reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuary Act.

Unfortunately, the latest Blueprint for Restoration for the Florida Keys National Sanctuary (FKNMS) unnecessarily restricts divers from participating in certain diving activities inside the Sanctuary area. Specifically, according to the Blueprint,

the final rule includes a new sanctuary-wide regulation **prohibiting the feeding or attracting of fish, including sharks, or other marine species from any vessel and/or while diving.**

This new fish feeding regulation does not prohibit feeding fish for the purposes of attracting them to harvest (kill) them (“traditional fishing”).

While the rule sent to Governor DeSantis for final approval indicates that “the regulatory text has been developed with additional input from agency staff with expertise in impacts to sharks and shark depredation, human safety concerns, and compliance and Enforcement,” the **regulatory text ignores the conclusions of independent scientists** such as Neil Hammerschlag from the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, University of Miami. Dr. Hammerschlag has concluded from his research that “provisioning ecotourism” - introducing small amounts of food in the water to interest sharks for the purpose of observation – does NOT create an increased risk for non-divers and swimmers not directly engaged in provisioning ecotourism activities.

This rule unnecessarily eliminates the opportunity for thousands of divers each year to actively and safely engage in observing sharks while gaining a better understanding of this creature. [In a study published in 2012 in Functional Ecology](#), Dr. Hammerschlag, *et al* conducted satellite telemetry studies and movement analysis to examine the long-range migrations and habitat utilization of tiger sharks (*Galeocerda cuvier*) originating in the Bahamas and Florida. These two areas were selected because they differ considerably with regards to the presence and absence of “provisioning ecotourism.” Florida banned shark diving beginning in January 2002 but continues to allow feeding of sharks in order to harvest them, while the Bahamas does not prohibit shark diving. The study concluded that, “in light of the potential for conservation and public awareness benefits of provisioning ecotourism, this practice should not be dismissed out of hand by (fisheries/site) managers. Given the pressing

need for improved understanding of the functional ecology of apex predators relative to human disturbance (rather than relying on perceived but unproven opinion), empirical studies of different species’ sensitivities to disturbance should be used to guide best-practice ecotourism policies that maximize conservation goals.”

While studies indicate that conditioning seems unlikely when using provision ecotourism, should such conditioning actually occur, danger to swimmers and divers still remains unlikely. [In a study of Great White Sharks \(*Carcharodon carcharias*\) published by Ryan L. Johnson of the University of Pretoria](#), South Africa, Allison Kock of the South African Shark Research Centre and Iziko Museums, *et al*, the authors state that, “It is highly improbable that ‘conditioning’ of sharks to a cage diving vessel would increase danger to human water-users such as swimmers, scuba divers and kayakers. This is due to the olfactory dissimilarity of these humans to the conditioned neutral stimulus (i.e. the cage diving vessel and associated structures).”

[In a Hawai’i-based study of cage diving](#) with sharks, which included provisioning ecotourism, Researchers Carl G. Meyer, University of Hawai’i System, and Yannis P. Papastamatiou, Florida International University found that, “Galapagos sharks (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*) and sandbar sharks (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*) were the most common species seen at cage diving sites (98% of all sharks observed). These species are rarely implicated in attacks on humans. Sharks remain at cage diving sites throughout the day and disperse at night. Sharks that visit North Shore cage diving sites also migrate seasonally to deep waters off the West side of Oahu, and range as far afield as Maui and Kauai. Inshore movements by sharks associated with cage diving operations are extremely rare. There is no evidence of sharks following boats back to the harbor. [There is no evidence indicating Haleiwa shark cage diving operations are a threat to public safety.](#)”

These studies suggest that shark diving, which most often includes provisioning ecotourism, does not create the risk to swimmers, divers and kayakers as is supposed by proponents of the shark feeding prohibition contained in the FKNMS rules.

[Is there economic value in diving with sharks that includes provisioning ecotourism?](#)

While it should now be clear that there is little to suggest that provisioning ecotourism to attract sharks creates a risk to swimmers, divers or kayakers, there is an abundance of research that indicates this practice is economically beneficial to the nearby communities.

Almost 200,000 new divers are trained and “certified” in the United States each year, and there are about 2.7 million currently active divers in the U.S. As stated, the Diving Industry depends on sustainable interaction with the marine environment, and is aware of the need for long term sustainability of these resources for all citizens of the U.S. The Industry is dedicated to a healthy marine environment and protection of aquatic resources, including sharks. For these reasons DEMA’s annual goals include a mandate to engage in activities which promote the health of aquatic resources while protecting diver access to those resources.

Divers contribute to local economies by paying to dive and vacationing in areas near dive sites. According to a study published by Oceana, conducted in collaboration with Duke University, and quoting a study conducted by the Cline Marketing Group, as a group scuba divers take an estimated 1.7 million dive vacations each year at an average cost of \$2,424 per trip, thus spending more than \$4.1 billion dollars in dive-related vacations annually. Divers contribute to tourism and tax revenues by purchasing day outings, extended dive trips, diving equipment, and by spending on hotels, food, airfare and ground transportation, and more. Through such purchases, diving also creates tourist-

related jobs, which contribute to the general economy where such tourism spending takes place. In total, including purchases of equipment, travel, training and other activities, recreational diving and snorkeling contribute about \$11 billion to the US gross domestic product.

Divers obtain personal value from seeing marine life when they dive and quantifying this value is important, in part, because it provides economic justification for the protection of marine wildlife. All one must do is be present on one of these dive boats as divers, both young and old, come back from seeing these rare and majestic creatures - a life changing experience for all that participate.

The Duke University/Oceana study assessed the value to divers of seeing healthy corals, sea turtles and sharks. Divers were asked the maximum amount of money they would be willing to pay, in addition to their normal dive costs, for an increased likelihood of seeing a particular species (“willingness to pay” or WTP). The study found that, assuming the total dive expense was \$100, the maximum amount of additional value for a diver to increase the likelihood of seeing a shark while diving was an additional \$35.56 per diver. The total annual value was cited as \$212.2 million.

In [Socio-economic value and community benefits from shark-diving tourism in Palau: A sustainable use of reef shark populations](#), authors G.M.S. Vianna, M.G. Meekan, et al determined that sharks may be more economically valuable as a non-harvested resource. On the small island of Palau alone, “shark diving was shown to be a major contributor to the economy of Palau, generating US\$18 million per year and accounting for approximately 8% of the gross domestic product of the country. Annually, shark diving was responsible for the disbursement of US\$1.2 million in salaries to the local community and generated US\$1.5 million in taxes to the government. If the population of approximately 100 sharks that interact with tourists at popular dive sites was harvested by

fishers, their economic value would be at most US\$10,800, a fraction of the worth of these animals as a non-consumptive resource. Fishers earn more selling fish for consumption to shark divers than they would gain by catching sharks. Shark diving provides an attractive economic alternative to shark fishing, with distribution of revenues benefiting several sectors of the economy, stimulating the development and generating high revenues to the government, while ensuring the ecological sustainability of shark populations.”

Studies in the Bahamas, where shark diving with and without cages is conducted regularly, indicate that these operations contribute more than \$78 million dollars annually to the Bahamian economy.

Clearly, sharks are far more valuable alive, with the added incentive of conservation and the opportunity for people to better understand this unique creature than if they are harvested.

A missed conservation and learning opportunity

These rules seek to prohibit an activity that can consistently bring everyday persons – trained divers but also novice snorkelers - into contact with these animals for observation, photographic and study purposes - and, far differently than would be suggested by popular misconceptions about shark behavior, it is actually quite unusual to see sharks closely enough for near observation or photography without being able to attract them through controlled feeding – simply put, sharks are normally either too shy or disinterested in divers and snorkelers for such close encounters to occur on a regular basis.

Persons participating in such activities see sharks first-hand and learn more about them. DEMA believes, and virtually every resource cited herein agrees, that, because of this benign ecotourism activity, all participants gain an appreciation for these animals that would otherwise be impossible. Such appreciation can lead to a greater understanding of the importance of these animals in maintaining a healthy aquatic

environment, and very often participants become “Shark Ambassadors” - ready to spread the word of the value of sharks in our marine ecosystem.

When people dive with sharks, they can observe them in their natural surroundings where they quickly learn that these animals are not “insidious monsters” as they are often depicted. The impact of movies such as “Jaws” and Discovery Channel’s “Shark Week” still drive the average citizen to initially believe that the only good shark, is a dead shark. Shark diving, which includes provisioning ecotourism, gives a broad segment of the population a better understanding of sharks and their role in the ecosystem and thus contributes directly to the protection of these animals and their natural habitat.

Attracting sharks through provisioning ecotourism has not been shown to encourage aggressive shark behavior toward swimmers and others, and studies indicate that this activity does not increase the risk of shark encounters or bites when other persons are swimming or are otherwise in the water where these creatures live. That has been shown at hundreds of shark-feeding sites around the world for more than 30 years. The studies also indicate great potential for economic value and conservation efforts.

The decline in shark population

As virtually everyone is aware, due to shark harvesting for the purpose of removing their fins, an abhorrent practice continuing in waters throughout the world, the shark population is declining. Estimates are that approximately 26 to 73 million sharks are being killed worldwide each year to satisfy the demand for shark fin soup. This point is made clear by the [infographic included here](#), which shows that worldwide fewer than 12 persons per year are killed by sharks, while at the same time, there are approximately 11,000 sharks killed worldwide by people, every single hour of every day.

A better alternative

There is an alternative. As is suggested by researchers in the [2015 study published in Marine Pollution Bulletin](#), with only speculative evidence of behavioral changes in sharks from provisioning ecotourism, it would be better if the ecotourism operators were required to implement safe marine interaction practices. Many years ago, a group of leading experts in the industry, the [Global Interactive Marine Experiences Council \(GIMEC\)](#), which included Peter Benchley (author of *Jaws*), shark experts from around the country, as well as many from Florida, developed safe interactive practices, many of which are incorporated into the experiences used by operators in the US today. Similar guidelines are also available through the [Project AWARE and World Wildlife Fund](#).

Requiring use of the GIMEC or Project AWARE Guidelines would be a much better alternative to banning provisioning ecotourism, while still addressing the initial concern of the bill, and not denying thousands of US citizens the opportunity to participate in a marine experience that changes the lives of both the citizen and the shark. U.S. Federal regulation of this activity is both intrusive and unnecessary. Data indicates that most shark dive operators already utilize such guidelines, rendering the need for government regulations moot.

It should be clear that there should be no prohibition on shark feeding as found in these unnecessary rules. This section is clearly designed to prohibit divers and others from seeing sharks swim unmolested in the water yet allows sharks to be harvested (killed) by fishers. Given the scientific evidence and the economics of observing sharks through “provisioning ecotourism” – the act of temporarily attracting sharks by concentrating a small quantity of food - the logic of allowing sharks to be harvested (killed) because of such feeding, but not simply viewed, escapes those with an understanding of this creature and this activity.

DEMA urged interested members to write directly to Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida and express opposition to these unnecessary and obtrusive rules contained in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary “Blueprint for Restoration.” **In March, in a brief, one-page letter to Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, DeSantis said the plan failed to pave the way for artificial reefs in state waters and stripped Florida of managing its own wildlife. “As published, the rule and management plan repeal longstanding references to the State of Florida’s sovereign right to manage marine life and sovereign submerged lands within the state’s jurisdictional waters,” DeSantis wrote.** Further action is pending.

For more information see [the Blueprint here](#), specifically pages 31, 78, 117 and 131.

THE U.S. FISHES ACT PASSES SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT

[Impact on Recreational Diving: Many diving businesses and associated small businesses \(restaurants, hotels, etc\) have been affected by fishery disasters in the past. The FISHERIES Act provides for relief in a timely manner to help their business operations and was signed by the President in early January.](#)

In early January H.R. 5103 – [“The Bipartisan Fishery Improvement to Streamline untimely regulatory Hurdles post Emergency Situation Act \(FISHES\) Act,”](#) was signed into law by the President of the United States.

“The FISHERIES Act” was broadly supported, bipartisan legislation meant to improve the federal regulatory process associated with the allocation of fishery disaster relief. Specifically, this bill seeks to expedite the distribution of federal disaster relief following official fishery disaster declarations—which the State of Florida has requested seven times since 2012.

[H.R. 5103](#) was sponsored by Congressman Byron Donalds (R-FL) and passed both the [U.S. House of Representatives](#) and [U.S. Senate](#) with votes of unanimous support. The legislation received the support of 160 endorsing entities including DEMA, along with fifty-two members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. In the Senate, Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) was the sponsor of “The Bipartisan FISHES Act” [Senate companion bill](#).

“For years, fishery disaster determinations across our nation have been left pending due to bureaucratic inaction,” **said Congressman Byron Donalds (R-FL 19)**. “This includes the catastrophic devastation caused by Hurricane Ian to our Southwest Florida community. This is a national problem and must change; and this is why I introduced ‘The FISHES Act’ alongside Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) to expedite fishery disaster relief to communities in need.”

Prior to passage, states applied for federal fishery disaster relief for a variety of reasons including day-to-day extreme weather, water quality issues, damage from hurricanes, and others. Some of these specific fishery impacts affect recreational diving, including:

- Boats and docks that are damaged or destroyed.
- Hotel and restaurant infrastructure damage that dissuades clients from diving in an affected area.
- Water quality issues impacting fish health due to high levels of salinity, harmful algal blooms in the water and other water quality problems. Some of these are well known to the diving industry, such as red tide impacts on goliath grouper.

This bill will help to modernize and streamline the federal fishery disaster relief funding process, helping to reduce the time needed to assist many diving businesses and

associated small businesses (restaurants, hotels, etc) which could otherwise go out of business before the relief is made available.

In April 2024 DEMA was asked by Congressman Donalds (FL-19) to support the federal FISHES Act. After review, DEMA’s PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED SUPPORTING THIS BILL and passed along their recommendation to the DEMA Board of Directors. On April 22, 2024, the DEMA Board signed and submitted a letter to Representative Donalds with thanks for assisting the recreational diving industry. [The DEMA Board letter is available here.](#)

FLORIDA MANATEES DENIED GREATER ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT PROTECTIONS

Impact on Recreational Diving: Florida’s Manatees have long been an attraction for snorkelers but in recent years have been subjected to degradation of their food supply primarily from land-based pollution and are often hit by speeding boats, causing severe injuries and death.

The classification of “threatened,” rather than “endangered,” implemented on January 13, 2025, under the Biden Administration, indicated that the “Florida manatee is a highly managed species for which many conservation initiatives have been and continue to be implemented to ameliorate threats, including efforts to improve water quality and restore seagrass. While we anticipate that the threats will continue to act on the subspecies in the future, they are not currently affecting the subspecies such that it is in danger of extinction now.”

NOTE: This is information from a press release from the Center for Biological Diversity, January 13, 2025

Florida Manatees Denied Greater Endangered Species Act Protections Antillean Manatee in Puerto Rico Granted Endangered Status

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.— The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Biden Administration today denied endangered status for the Florida manatee and proposed to protect the Antillean manatee of Puerto Rico as endangered.

A 2022 [petition](#) submitted by Harvard Law School’s Animal Law & Policy Clinic on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, Save the Manatee Club, Miami Waterkeeper and Frank S. González Garcia sought to increase protections for Florida manatees from threatened to endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

“It’s great news that Puerto Rico’s Antillean manatees finally won the endangered status they need to get on the road to recovery, but I’m disappointed the Fish and Wildlife Service didn’t give Florida manatees the same protection,” said Ragan Whitlock, a Florida-based attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. “The agency’s denial completely failed to account for the ongoing die-off that is weakening the manatees’ chance at long-term survival. Thousands of manatees have starved to death in the last few years, and that should have been accounted for.”

The West Indian manatee, including both the Florida and Puerto Rico subspecies, was previously [downlisted](#) to threatened in 2017. At the time, despite warnings from conservation organizations, the Service failed to consider the possibility that an unusual mortality event was on the horizon in the Indian River Lagoon.

The Florida manatee has now endured more than three years of a devastating die-off event in which more than 2,000 manatees have starved to death. Despite having the mortality data, the Service failed to incorporate the threat into today’s findings.

“While we are disappointed by the Fish and Wildlife Service’s decision not to extend endangered status to all West Indian manatees, we are pleased that the agency acknowledged the endangered status of the Antillean manatee,” said Mary Hollingsworth of Harvard’s Animal Law & Policy Clinic. “We remain steadfast in our commitment to advocate for the conservation of all West Indian manatees.”

The Service previously issued a [90-day finding](#) indicating the petition presented substantial information that increasing protections may be warranted. The agency found that as seagrass dwindles because of water pollution, Florida manatees may need greater protection.

This finding dismissed the declining seagrasses across Florida despite recognition from the EPA and the Service that water-quality standards in the Indian River Lagoon in Florida, one of the most ecologically important estuaries for the species, aren’t being met.

“The failure of the Fish and Wildlife Service to take into account the best available scientific information regarding uncontrolled risks and threats to the manatees’ future survival when they unjustifiably downlisted manatees from endangered to threatened in 2017 left the manatee population unprotected from the ensuing devastating mass starvation due to large scale seagrass loss over the preceding decade,” said Patrick Rose, an aquatic biologist and executive director of Save the Manatee Club. “Sadly, it appears the Service has repeated its previous grievous mistake by once again failing to incorporate the best available scientific information as it relates to the well documented Unusual Mortality Event of thousands of Florida manatees from starvation. Thereby, denying the manatees the full strength of the Endangered Species Act at a time when current risks and threats to Florida manatees are rapidly accelerating due to water

quality degradation and climate change.”

Water-quality degradation across the state has led to precipitous seagrass declines. Unchecked pollution — from wastewater treatment discharges, leaking septic systems, fertilizer runoff and other sources — is fueling the collapse of the Indian River Lagoon, leading to the unprecedented mortality event. Nearly 2,000 manatees died in just 2021 and 2022 combined. This two-year record represents more than 20% of all [manatees](#) in Florida.

State and federal agencies are also [preparing](#) for the loss of several warm-water havens that manatees frequent along Florida’s coast as warm-water outfalls are removed from several coastal power plants. The Service estimates that more than half of Florida’s manatees seek shelter from the cold at warm-water discharges from power plants. Natural warm-water sources are severely threatened by water-quality declines from excess nutrient pollution and groundwater pumping, leaving the manatees dependent on these man-made refugia. Many natural warm water sources are also impeded by manmade structures like the Rodman/Kirkpatrick dam on the Ocklawaha River.

“The failure to uplist Florida’s manatee ignores the widespread population declines that manatees have suffered, as well as the severity of the ongoing threats to the survival of the species — particularly from seagrass loss due to water pollution,” said Dr. Rachel Silverstein, executive director and waterkeeper of Miami Waterkeeper. “This decision leaves the manatee without the stronger protections that it needs to persist. Miami Waterkeeper, alongside our partners, remains committed to advocating for the Florida manatee and to addressing the water pollution and other threats that are causing its decline.”

Meanwhile, the Antillean population of manatees also faces significant threats. Current estimates suggest as few as 250 manatees currently live in

Puerto Rico. The population’s genetic diversity is also very low, which decreases manatees’ ability to adapt to changing conditions and rebound after unexpected mortality events such as hurricanes, boat strikes or disease. Today’s finding separates the Florida manatee from the Antillean manatee in Puerto Rico as listable entities. The Antillean manatee is now proposed for endangered status.

“This is one small, late step forward for Puerto Rico’s Antillean manatees, but a wasted opportunity for the recovery and protection of Florida manatees,” said Frank S. González García, a Puerto Rican engineer concerned about the loss of natural resources. “Both subspecies face extremely high mortality rates and risk of extinction, vastly due to an ever-increasing plethora of diverse unfavorable human activities and conditions.”

The Endangered Species Act is a powerful tool for preventing extinction and helping vulnerable species recover. It’s [99% effective](#) at preventing species under its protection from going extinct.

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THE U.S. FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION FILES SUIT AGAINST EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER – RAMIFICATIONS FOR DIVING

[Impact on Recreational Diving: Diving Equipment Manufacturers should be aware that the “right to repair” movement may impact them. The example case is not diving related, but the implications are that users may be able to recover damages if they are unable to obtain parts or tools for dive equipment repair.](#)

NOTE: This article is sourced from Today’s General Counsel, February 13, 2025.

While this information provides an example from outside the diving industry, its implications are that all manufacturers (including those in the diving industry) must take care to provide access to parts and tools for equipment repair.

FTC and State of Minnesota v. Deere & Company

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission and Illinois and Minnesota attorneys general have filed a lawsuit against John Deere. The lawsuit accuses Deere of a monopoly on repair services by limiting access to essential software, forcing farmers to rely on Deere’s authorized dealers for repairs.

The FTC argues that such restrictions harm independent repair shops and farmers who need timely and affordable equipment repairs. Deere maintains that it supports customers’ right to repair and has taken steps to provide access to repair tools.

The case stems from concerns about Deere’s use of proprietary software in its agricultural equipment. Farmers and independent repair shops have struggled to get necessary diagnostic and repair tools. Deere reserves the only fully functional repair software for its authorized

network. This leads to increased repair costs and delays, negatively impacting farmers’ ability to maintain their machinery during critical agricultural seasons. In response to mounting pressure, Deere signed an agreement with the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) in 2023, pledging to expand access to repair tools.

The FTC’s lawsuit contends that Deere’s actions constitute abuse of monopoly power in violation of antitrust laws. The agency seeks to eliminate Deere’s repair restrictions, arguing that these policies limit competition and inflate repair costs. Deere disputes the claims, arguing that the lawsuit ignores ongoing negotiations to resolve these concerns.

Notably, the change in administration may affect this case. President Trump’s FTC chair, Andrew Ferguson, has voiced skepticism about the lawsuit’s timing, suggesting it may interfere with an ongoing investigation and negotiations.

For dive manufacturers, the case underscores the growing regulatory scrutiny of repair restrictions across industries under former FTC chair Lina Khan. The present administration change may temper aggressive enforcement, although much of its base supports right-to-repair mandates.

Companies implementing similar repair limitations should be prepared for potential legal challenges under antitrust and consumer protection laws. Broadly, this litigation signals an aggressive shift in the right-to-repair movement. Whether that trend continues affects technology, automotive, and other equipment-dependent sectors, including the diving industry.

SS UNITED STATES STARTS ITS JOURNEY TO BECOME HISTORIC WRECK

[Impact on Recreational Diving: Artificial reefs like the SS United States have been shown to increase the local abundance of certain fish and other marine species and increase the](#)

diversity of species in an area, especially in bare-bottom areas that do not naturally have structure like coral or rocky reefs. The SS United States will be world’s largest artificial reef, and will attract divers from all over the world, promoting and growing diving worldwide.

After nearly 30 years, the historic SS United States departed Philadelphia on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025. It’s headed to the coast of Florida, where it will be sunk and eventually turned into the world’s largest artificial reef.

The ship will stop in Mobile, Alabama for preparation. That includes removing contaminants such as fuel and paint, along with command bridge components, engine room equipment, wires, cables, loose items, flooring, furnishings, and others before it is taken to Florida. This process is expected to require the remainder of this year.

Once cleaned, the ship will head to Okaloosa County, Florida where the ocean liner will be sunk and turned into a scuba-diving destination, and fish attractor. “The SS United States will be towed more than 1800 nautical miles, at 5 knots per hour, from Philadelphia, through Delaware Bay, into the Atlantic Ocean, past Cape Hatteras, around the Florida Peninsula, into the Gulf, and onto The Bay of Mobile,” said Captain Joseph Farrell, who organizers noted as a ship-sinking and reef expert, in a statement. “The voyage is expected to take 18 days.”

The SS United States was once considered the “pride of America’s merchant marine fleet.” According to Captain Farrell, “the SS United States is a testament to America’s might and engineering ingenuity. Her sinking is the final chapter for the last all-American-made; America-flagged ocean liner.”

When it was in service, from 1952 through 1969, the Steam Ship (SS) United States hosted many well-known passengers, including

four U.S. Presidents, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, Jackie Gleason, Marlon Brando, Judy Garland, Charlton Heston, Joan Crawford, Walt Disney, Bob Hope and others. The ship holds the record for the fastest eastbound and westbound trans-Atlantic cruise ship crossing.

DEMA has long been a supporter of artificial reefs which help aggregate and attract marine life and help take fishing and other pressures off natural reefs. DEMA supported Florida’s Ships2Reefs bill, enacted in 2008. A letter from DEMA in support of the [SS United States can be found here](#).

A video of the departure from Philadelphia of the SS United States can be seen [on YouTube here](#).

You can learn more about the SS United States at the Ships 2 Reefs display at DEMA Central, during DEMA Show 2025!

HOUSE AND SENATE BILLS PROPOSE WIRELESS ALERTS FOLLOWING A SHARK ATTACK – LULU’S LAW

[Impact on Recreational Diving: A shark attack in June 2024 injured Florida teenaged swimmer teenager Lulu Gibbon. While horrific, shark attacks are extremely rare. This swimming incident prompted an Alabama lawmaker to propose legislation in March to notify cell phone users by text when a shark attack occurs, similar to Amber or Silver alerts. While perhaps well-intentioned, DEMA recognizes that this kind of warning is NOT used for far more common animal attacks \(i.e., dogs, bears, snakes, wolves\). As such it is DEMA’s opinion that this proposed law would serve to promote additional unnecessary hysteria against sharks which is already present in the media and which has led to a continued decline in shark populations.](#)

In June 2024, a [teenager was injured by a shark](#) while swimming near the shore in the Florida Panhandle area. The girl lost her hand, and her leg had to later be amputated.

This specific attack has prompted an Alabama Congressman to propose a federal law to alert the public should a shark attack occur. Called “Lulu’s Law” after the teenage victim of the attack, H.R. 2076 proposes to “require the Federal Communications Commission to issue an order providing that a shark attack is an event for which a wireless emergency alert may be transmitted.” In March a Senate version of the bill was introduced by Alabama Senator Katie Britt.

Sharks are known to frequent the near shore areas in Florida and other states during the summer, and attacks (provoked and unprovoked) are more frequent as more swimmers enter the water during the summer months. According to the [International Shark Attack File of the Florida Museum](#) fatalities from shark attack are far less frequent than fatalities from lightning strikes or human bites.

Source of Fatality (US)	Average Annual Fatalities from Source	Annual Shark Fatality
Lightning Strike	38	0.5
Tornados in Florida	5	0.2
Rip Currents	36	0.8
Bear Attacks (1900-2011)	2	0.34
Dog Attacks (2009-2018)	32	7

What are the Odds?

According to the West and East Coast US Life-guard Associations, about 264 million swimmers attend the beaches annually (Source: International Shark Attack File). Using this as a base figure:

- Drowning and other beach-related fatalities: 1 in 2 million
- Drowning fatalities: 1 in 3.5 million
- Shark attacks: 1 in 11.5 million
- Shark attack fatalities: < 1 in 264.1 million

Source: International Shark Attack File

A 2024 Shark Attack Summary Report can be [found here](#).

While perhaps well-intentioned, with the odds of being injured or killed low for shark attack and odds of injury or death much higher for many other activities or encounters, it would seem this proposed legislation is misplaced and would generate unnecessary hysteria over the presence of sharks at a swimming beach. In addition, there are already measures in place at most beaches: when potentially dangerous marine animals are present, purple flags are used, or red flags, for dangerous currents. These reminder flags are used to advise persons who are present on the beach or in the water, rather than those that may be in their homes or driving their cars. Additionally, alerts like the Amber and Silver alerts are used to remind people to look for and find potential lost or missing individuals, not to advise persons to avoid a particular life activity.

While a version of Lulu’s law passed in the U.S. Senate, the bill remains under consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The text of [HR 2076 can be found here](#).
The text of [S 1003 can be found here](#).

EU ADOPTS THE CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY DUE DILIGENCE DIRECTIVE

[Impact on Recreational Diving: The adoption of the Corporate Sustainable Due Diligence Directive \(CSDDD\) will have financial and operations implications on any diving companies doing business with companies based in the European Union. The CSDDD mandates practices](#)

for companies doing business in the European Union, regardless of whether those companies are headquartered in the EU. The CSDDD also forces those companies to impose the same standards on many of the businesses operating within their global supply chains. The CSDDD may make it more difficult to obtain affordable equipment from some companies with ties to the EU.

On May 24, 2024, the European Union (EU) officially adopted the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). It was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on July 5, 2024, and entered into full effect on July 25, 2024.

The CSDDD attempts to globally institutionalize sweeping environmental, social and government objectives by mandating practices for companies doing business in the European Union, regardless of whether those companies are headquartered in the EU. The CSDDD requires those companies to impose the same standards on many of the businesses operating within their global supply chains.

EU policymakers deliberately designed the CSDDD to change business practices around the world, rather than only within the jurisdiction of EU member states.

In 2024 Professors [Rachel Chambers and David Birchall in the UC Law Business Journal explained that](#), “[The CSDDD] is designed to be extraterritorial. The aim is to compel companies based within a jurisdiction to comply with human rights rules that are generally well enforced within that jurisdiction throughout its global operations. Extraterritoriality is very much the point.”

All 27 member states of the European Union are required to transpose the CSDDD into their national laws by July 26, 2026. EU countries will then be individually responsible for enforcing those laws. According to the Heartland Institute, “the CSDDD can best be understood as the

regulatory floor to which EU member states must adhere during transposition, though they can make the obligations more severe if they choose.” Companies within the CSDDD’s direct scope will be forced to adhere to the CSDDD in various phases, with the largest companies having to comply by July 26, 2027. By July 26, 2029, **all affected companies** will have been phased in.

The CSDDD requires companies to change large parts of their operations, often in ways that are likely to drive up costs. For example, the CSDDD mandates companies align their practices with the Paris Climate Agreement, curtail water and land consumption, reduce and reverse biodiversity loss, and eventually eliminate their use of fossil fuels, among many other stipulations. All these actions come with substantial economic costs that will be passed on to consumers in the United States, Europe, and around the world.

For more information on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, see this [Policy Study from the Heartland Institute](#).

CANADA UPDATES TRAVEL RULES TO UNITED STATES – VISA WIZARD

[Impact on Recreational Diving: Many Canadians travel to go diving in the United States, especially during the cooler months and early spring. Enforcement of an immigration rule, in place since 1940, has caused Canada to issue new guidance on travel for its citizens visiting the U.S. Negative media attention on this issue may cause the enforcement of the current law to have an adverse impact on diving businesses in the States.](#)

Canada has updated its rules for citizens traveling to the United States. Starting April 11, Canadians who will be in the United States for more than 30 days will be required to register with United States authorities.

The requirement is part of a previously (largely) unenforced act, also known as the “Smith Act,”

established in 1940. Enforcement comes as part of the “Protecting the American People Against Invasion” order signed by U.S. President Donald Trump. The rule requires all visitors over the age of 14, staying for 30 days or longer, to register with the U.S. government.

While most travelers entering the United States from Canada are **automatically registered** with an electronic I-94 admission record upon entering the U.S., the “Protecting the American People Against Invasion” order mandates that all visitors above the age of 14 who remain in the United States for 30 days or longer must apply for registration and be fingerprinted before the expiration of 30 days, **if they were not registered as part of their electronic I-94**. Similarly, parents and legal guardians must ensure that their children below the age of 14 are registered. Within 30 days of reaching his or her 14th birthday, the alien child must apply in person for registration and to be fingerprinted.

Visitors are advised to check if they were issued an electronic I-94 upon entry to the United States. This can be done by visiting, <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/home>. Select “Get Most Recent I-94,” agree to the terms of service, then enter your traveler information. This includes your first and last name, date of birth, country of citizenship and your document number (passport number).

If a visitor’s latest I-94 appears, there is no further action required. An electronic I-94 means they have already registered with the federal government. If an I-94 has not been found, it is advised that the visitor register with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Under the alien registration requirements of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), with limited exceptions (e.g., for visa holders who have already been registered and fingerprinted through their application for a visa) and A and G visa holders, see [8 U.S.C. 1201\(b\)](#)), all aliens above the age of 14 who remain in the United States

for 30 days or longer must apply for registration. The law indicates that these aliens staying more than 30 days must be fingerprinted before the expiration of 30 days. See [8 U.S.C. 1302\(a\)](#), however, as of this writing the Department of Homeland Security has published an interim final rule stating that **a fingerprint requirement for Canadian nonimmigrants has been waived**.

As the Smith Act is enforced, those arranging for divers to travel to the U.S., and travelers themselves, are advised to review the requirements. The information from the [federal register can be found here](#). The Canadian travel advisory indicates that one should take “normal security precautions.” Additional recommendations and [requirements can be found here](#).

Business Travelers – Is a Visa Required? Business travelers from Canada entering the United States for the purposes of visiting trade shows and conferences are NOT required to have a visa. Entry into the United State for business purposes can vary depending on the country from which the business traveler is arriving. To determine the requirements for business entry, go to the [U.S. government’s “Visa Wizard” page found here](#).

NEW YEAR, NEW CONGRESS - ASK NEW LEADERS TO SUPPORT THE DIVE BOAT ACT *[Impact on Recreational Diving: If this bill passes, the current cost of vessel liability insurance could be reduced. Actions taken by Congress have resulted in unnecessary and unfair increases in insurance rates for dive vessels.](#)*

New Year, New Congress! Time to Ask New Leaders to Support the Dive Community!

With all new leaders in the U.S. Congress DEMA needs members of the diving community to tell your Senators and House Representatives to support [the DIVE BOAT Act](#). The diving

industry and DEMA will be much more successful in making this change if we come together as a community and federal elected officials hear from their constituents.

Together, we CAN prevent further layoffs, help bring down insurance costs, and ease some of the domestic scuba diving pricing pressures.

We ask that you **share the DIVE BOAT Act campaign messages and graphics** with your social media followers in support of this important legislation. Even if you’ve helped before, **we have a NEW Congress with NEW LEADERS and must bring this critical issue to these new lawmakers’ attention!**

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- 1. [Click here](#) to **use our advocacy software to connect with your representatives** and quickly send an email (with an option to use a prewritten message).
- 2. We ask that you [share the campaign messages and images found here](#) with your social media followers, asking for their support of The DIVE BOAT Act.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the DIVE BOAT Act.

FLORIDA DIVE IN DAY IN TALLAHASSEE

Impact on Recreational Diving: In today’s business and political climate it is important for DEMA to be “at the table” with lawmakers

to discuss issues important to scuba diving, snorkeling, reef and water quality and many other Florida issues. Legislative advocacy works best when members of the diving industry participate in DEMA’s efforts. Dive In Day at the Capitol in Tallahassee is an important event for keeping diving in front of lawmakers.

On April 30, 2025, DEMA sponsored “Dive in Day” at the Capitol in Tallahassee, Florida, giving DEMA Members the opportunity to visit the Florida state Capitol, showcase their diving-related products and services, and promote issues relating to the scuba diving industry.

Dive in Day provides a platform to engage Florida’s 160 legislators, the Governor and their staff members, and hundreds of visitors to the Capitol. For the first time since 2019, DEMA has reserved the courtyard and first floor of the Capitol building to give DEMA Members and Florida-based diving businesses an opportunity to showcase Florida’s recreational diving operators. It’s a chance to highlight the importance of scuba diving to Florida’s economy, tourism, and marine ecosystems while advocating for policies that sustain our industry.

DEMA uses this opportunity to bring attention to issues critical to the Industry in Florida and has plans to meet with Senators or Representatives or their staff members to discuss diving-related topics important to business leaders. Attendees are invited to participate,

and these meetings can include discussions on a variety of issues that affect the Florida scuba diving industry, such as ecotourism, the future of the goliath grouper, spiny lobster, lionfish environmental issues, and others.

As part of Dive In Day, DEMA’s legislative advocate Bob Harris distributed relevant information to legislators and Capitol visitors which includes the size of the diving industry in Florida and its importance in jobs, tourism, and the economy with a focus on the economic benefit of Florida dive businesses and the protection of sharks and their vital role in the marine ecosystem.

For Dive In Day DEMA invites all Florida diving businesses (members and non-members) to participate in this event at no charge. DEMA members receive additional incentives to participate: Member dive retailers (normally attendees at DEMA Show) receive one free seminar registration per company, while participating Member companies that exhibit at DEMA Show receive two additional seniority space selection points.

Each participating company is provided with an 8-foot table and two chairs for their display. There are spaces for display both indoors and outdoors (weather dependent).

Dive In Day at the Capitol has two primary activities:

- 1. Display of the company and its products/ services at the capitol building for all visitors and lawmakers to see.
- 2. An opportunity to speak with lawmakers about issues that impact recreational diving in Florida.

In 2025 dive businesses are most impacted by federal issues (the Small Passenger Vessel Act) that are causing insurance issues to rise. Because this was an event that mostly engaged with state officials, DEMA provided Florida Lawmakers

with a package of information on recreational diving and the Florida economy. In past years DEMA has also arranged one-on-one meetings with lawmakers to discuss specific issues such as invasive species (e.g. lionfish) and shark feeding.

DEMA welcomed 15 companies to exhibit at Dive In Day and identified 8 current Florida lawmakers who are diving enthusiasts. There was concern that the event would not be staged because it had been postponed for five years, but the event was well received by participants.

MOTION GRANTED FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT IN PROP 65 LITIGATION

Impact on Recreational Diving: While the focus of this litigation was acrylamide - a product found in food and beverages - the motion granted for summary judgment that prevents the state of California from mandating the listing of this chemical as a carcinogen when the science on this issue is undetermined, is a win for the First Amendment. When other chemicals and products used in the diving industry have not been determined to cause cancer, this ruling will help prevent Prop 65 mandates from the state of California for labeling by manufacturers and retail outlets.

On May 2, 2025, in answer to litigation filed on behalf of California Businesses (including DEMA) by the California Chamber of Commerce (CalChamber) the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California granted a CalChamber motion for summary judgment in a case involving Prop 65 and the chemical acrylamide. The litigation has been pending since October of 2019. Specifically, the court held that “the State’s Prop 65 warnings as to dietary acrylamide are unconstitutional and [hereby grants] CalChamber’s request for declaratory relief and a permanent injunction enjoining enforcement of the Prop 65 warning requirements as to dietary acrylamide.” This

Company Name	Contact Name	Email	Phone	Legislator
Compressed Air Supplies & Equipment Inc.	Sean Batchelder	sean@compressedairsupplies.com	954-929-4462	Sen. Pizzo, Rep. Cassel
Odyssey Adventures	Clifford Horton	info@trukodyssey.com	904-346-3766	Sen. Davis, Rep Duggan
Sea Experience	Bill Cole	bill@divefortlauderdale.com	954-394-8732	Sen. Pizzo, Rep. LaMarca
Dive Pros	Kerry Freeland	kevin@florida-divepros.com	850-456-8845	Sen. Gaetz, Rep. Andrade
Emerald Coast Scuba	Anna Schmitz	ecsdivedestin@aol.com	850-837-0955	Sen. Trumbull, Rep. Maney
ScubaTech of NorthWest Florida, Inc	Nancy Birchett	scubatech@scubatechnwfl.com	850-837-2822	
Red Alert Diving	Todd Yarbrough	todd@redalertdiving.com	850-238-8760	Sen. Trumbull, Rep. Griffiths
Destin - Fort Walton Beach	Alex Fogg	afogg@myokaloosa.com	443-995-6416	
Fat Guy Scuba Supply LLC	Robert Wesler	rcwesler@fatguyscubasupply.com	813-892-3812	Sen. Gruters, Rep. McFarland
Scubalinx	Germain Moya	germain@scubalinx.co	386-965-1017	Sen. Bradley, Rep. Brannan
Seminole Scuba Club	Sydney Harrison	fsuscubaclub@gmail.com		Sen. Simon, Rep. Tant
FSU UCSI Program	Michael Davis	md24bq@fsu.edu	850-770-2202	Sen. Simon, Rep. Tant
Gulf Specimen Lab	Hunter Eichler	heichler@gulfspecimen.org		Sen. Simon, Rep. Shoaf
PADI	Lucy Dunbar			
UF/IFAS Extension and Florida Sea Grant Agent	Victor Blancomar	victorblancomar@ufl.edu	850-838-3508	Sen. Bradley, Rep. Johnson

Dive In Day Participants for 2025

decision is a legal victory for businesses all over the U.S., as meeting the requirements of California’s Prop 65 impact any product produced or sold in California. The ruling affirms CalChamber’s position that the State of California’s mandated warning for acrylamide in food products violates the First Amendment.

The court agreed that “compelling businesses to provide a warning that implies a known cancer risk—when the science remains unsettled on this —amounts to unconstitutional compelled speech.” The decision mirrors concern raised by [Judge Daniel Calabretta](#) during oral argument, particularly that the average consumer is likely to misinterpret the warning as affirming a definitive cancer risk even though such risk is unsupported by consensus scientific evidence.

This outcome not only protects businesses from bounty hunters suing over the presence of acrylamide in food and beverage products, but also upholds the principle that government-mandated disclosures must not be misleading or factually inaccurate. The ruling adds to the growing number of similar cases, setting helpful First Amendment precedence. While the State of California may choose to appeal (deadline for appeal is June 2), this ruling sets an important precedent in defending free speech rights against overly broad regulatory mandates.

How Does Prop 65 Affect the Diving Industry and DEMA Members?

Prop 65 gives consumers and their attorneys the ability to sue businesses that do not include the proper warning labels on products containing chemicals associated with cancer and birth defects.

Although this law is enacted in in California, it is important for all in the diving industry to understand that it applies to all products sold in the state, regardless of where they are produced. Any product sold in California must meet the Prop 65 requirements. **In**

fact, the only companies safe from the reach of Prop 65 are those not producing or selling merchandise in California.

Overview: California’s Proposition 65 Labeling Law

Enacted by California voters in 1986, Prop 65 requires warning labels on products containing chemicals listed as known to cause cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm. As of January 2025, there are [over 1,000 chemicals](#) on the list. Prop 65 doesn’t stop anyone from selling their products - no matter what chemicals they contain—it is simply a law that requires consumer warning labels under certain circumstances.

Businesses with ten (10) employees or more that do business in California must comply with Prop 65. The warning requirement applies to any business in the chain of distribution, including manufacturers, re-marketers, distributors, and retailers, including out-of-state companies selling products in California.

The California Attorney General or a district attorney can pursue enforcement. However, most suits are brought by private parties claiming to be “acting in the public interest” who will then receive a portion of the fine or settlement ultimately assessed on the alleged violator.

Unfortunately, the law appears to have spawned a predatory trial lawyer industry focused on using the law to net large settlements. Private lawyers start by filing a “notice of violation” with the Attorney General and the accused business. The notice is detailed in terms of the alleged violation, [naming a specific chemical\(s\)](#) for which there may be inadequate warning and including an expert’s statement meant to support the alleged claims.

Under the law, fines can run up to \$2,500 per day per violation. For many faced with Prop 65 cases, known as “headhunter” suits, it can feel like a shakedown because Prop 65

lawsuits are expensive to fight, and defendants often settle quickly to avoid the high cost of litigation. At times it may be questionable as to whether there has been a violation of the law since there may be limited consumer exposure to the specific chemical.

Proposition 65 is a complex statutory and regulatory scheme. Every case is different, and compliance will depend on the nature of the product and chemical at issue, how the product is sold, and many other factors. For more information, see <https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/>

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA) BANS PORTABLE CHARGERS AND POWER BANKS THAT USE LITHIUM BATTERIES

[Impact on Recreational Diving: Divers traveling with cameras, phones, and laptop computers should be aware that they are now required to carry portable chargers, power banks and spare lithium-ion batteries in their carry-on baggage. Some airlines are requiring that these items always remain visible while onboard the aircraft.](#)

Following a U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ruling, the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) says it is now banning passengers from storing portable chargers and power banks that use lithium batteries in their checked bags. Any lithium-ion and lithium-metal batteries, including power banks and portable charging devices, now must be stored in carry-on luggage only.

[The FAA](#) has indicated that when a carry-on bag is checked at the gate or at planeside, all spare lithium batteries and power banks must be removed from the bag and kept with the passenger in the aircraft cabin. The battery terminals must be protected from short circuit. Further, to be permitted on the

plane, the lithium-ion batteries and power banks must meet specific requirements:

- The battery must be under 100 watt-hours (Wh) unless the airline gives explicit approval. With airline approval, passengers may also carry up to two spare larger lithium-ion batteries (101–160 Wh) or Lithium metal batteries (2-8 grams). This size covers the larger after-market extended-life laptop computer batteries, and some larger batteries used in professional audio/visual equipment. Batteries exceeding 160 Wh are forbidden.
- The power bank must have a clearly visible label showing its watt-hour rating.
- Unlabeled, oversized, or suspicious-looking chargers are at risk of being confiscated.
- Carrying multiple devices may result in additional screening.

Travelers should be aware of these technical restrictions: chargers sold online often fail to clearly list watt-hour specs, and some cases, the labeling is entirely absent. If TSA agents can’t verify the battery size, they may seize the item on the spot. If you are unsure of your battery’s Wh, you can calculate it using the [calculator found at the bottom of this FAA web page](#).

According to the FAA, the reason lithium-ion batteries are no longer allowed in the cargo hold is because of a process called “thermal runaway,” which can occur without warning due to damaged, overheating, overcharging, exposure to water or improper storage.

Flight crews are trained to deal with any lithium battery-based fires in the cabin, and passengers are asked to notify crew members if their device begins overheating, expanding, smoking or burning.

Southwest Airlines Rules

Beginning May 28, travelers on Southwest Airlines will be required to keep lithium-ion battery chargers (power banks) visible during the flight. These items can no longer be stored in carry-ons in the overhead bin or zipped-up backpacks under your seat. Instead, the device must be in plain sight so flight crews can respond quickly in case of a malfunction.

According to *The Hill*, “[Southwest will introduce a first-in-industry safety policy on May 28](#), requiring customers to keep portable charging devices visible while in use during flight,” the airline wrote. “Using portable charging devices while stored in a bag or overhead bin will no longer be permitted.”

Visit the [FAA website](#) for more information.

THAILAND RESTRICTS UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCUBA DIVERS

[Impact on Recreational Diving: Divers traveling to or working in Thailand should be aware of these new restrictions on scuba diving in that country. Divers are often blamed for damage to coral reefs, but diving is not inherently a consumptive activity, and most often damage to coral reefs is not a result of diver activity. Rather damage to coral reefs is often the result of pollution affecting water quality from sources such as runoff from land-based operations and other factors. Travelers to Thailand should be aware of these new restrictions and must obey these regulations.](#)

Source: *The Nation*, <https://www.nationthailand.com>

The Thailand Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has declared new regulations which they claim will protect fragile coral reefs, with restrictions on cameras for less experienced divers.

The regulations state that only divers certified to Advanced Open Water level or those with

a logbook proving at least 40 “deep dives” will be permitted to take cameras underwater. They must also be able to present their certification or logbook to officials upon request.

Thailand authorities have cited the severe damage to the coral reefs from diving tourism as the reason for the stringent regulations, emphasizing the urgent need for conservation to ensure sustainable use of these vital marine resources.

For snorkelers the rules stipulate that the water level must be at least two meters above the coral to minimize disturbance. Dive operators, licensed instructors, and their assistants are empowered to immediately halt the diving activities of anyone who disregards their guidance. Furthermore, instructors and assistants who fail to warn non-compliant tourists could face the revocation of their licenses.

The new rules will not apply to diving activities undertaken for academic research, education, or marine conservation and restoration projects carried out under the supervision of relevant authorities.

MINNESOTA DIVE LAW

[Impact on Recreational Diving: In 2025 a new law affecting both recreational and commercial diving was introduced in the state of Minnesota. The law should have been confined to commercial use of Scuba but the language in the law included the requirement of a recreational scuba certification. DEMA contacted lawmakers and provided additional information. It is critical to watch MN and other states to avoid this conflation of recreational and commercial diving regulation.](#)

In 2024 two individuals employed by Minnesota companies that remove aquatic vegetation from lakes in that state died while working underwater. Neither of the victims were certified divers – one had no training on scuba, the other allegedly had 15 minutes of training. In response, lawmakers in MN drafted language to regulate commercial

scuba diving in the state. A news article came to the attention of DEMA and after reading the bill language, DEMA contacted state lawmakers with suggested changes to the language. DEMA does not normally get involved with commercial diving regulation, but the language conflated recreational and commercial diving, and DEMA believed it was necessary to assist. Members of the Public Policy Committee, Lobbyist Bob Harris and Tom Ingram got involved with the lawmakers, to make recommendations. Tom Ingram previously taught commercial scuba operations at Florida Institute of Technology’s Underwater Technology degree program and it was hoped this would provide enough validity to encourage the use of the commercial standards in any MN bill. DEMA also reached out to the [Association of Diving Contractors International](#) (ADCI), the commercial diving equivalent to DEMA. ADCI did not respond to requests for assistance.

Initially the proposed bill language required that divers employed in aquatic vegetation removal have an “open water diver” certification. DEMA pointed out that this was NOT sufficient for a diver performing this activity and that a commercial scuba certification was required by the commercial diving consensus standards, and recommended as the goal of open water certification is recreational, not commercial operations. DEMA also made suggestions regarding additional equipment that should be required, as well as the need for a standby diver and training in CPR and First Aid as recommended by the ANSI, OSHA, and ADCI commercial standards.

DEMA also reached out to all dive stores in Minnesota to inform them of what was taking place and to inquire about whether any lawmaker’s office had contacted them for information. All were appreciative of being informed about the pending bill, but none had been contacted, and they were completely

unaware of the pending bills in the House and Senate.

There was resistance from MN lawmakers to including the required equipment and stand by diver recommendations made by DEMA and the Commercial Diving Consensus Standards. In addition, it was apparent that there was little knowledge about diving on the part of the lawmakers. Even the operators seemed to be working in the blind: One of the commercial diving companies was invited by Representative Dave Baker to attend a Zoom call which DEMA organized with Representative Baker and his staff, and it was clear that the operators had no idea of the risks involved with working in this environment from lung overpressure accidents or drowning (DEMA sent information on lung expansion accidents to the operator in the hopes of educating them). Up to this point the use of a safety diver, requirements for CPR and First Aid for all participants, the need for oxygen onsite, and other recommendations had not been considered.

After numerous emails and letters from DEMA with recommendations and suggestions, it was apparent that the MN lawmakers had done all they intended to do to regulate this activity. In April 2025 the MN bill was passed and signed into law by the governor. While some of the recommendations DEMA made were included in the final bill language, many were ignored or made “optional” for the employer. Ignoring the consensus commercial standards may lead to future diving accidents.

DEMA continues to monitor dive operators in Minnesota.

FREEDOM TO INVEST IN TOMORROW’S WORKFORCE INCLUDED IN TAX PACKAGE

[Impact on Recreational Diving: With the passage of this bill, training organizations and dive centers could see more candidates for](#)

diving instructor training, and more people choosing diving instruction as a career.

The bipartisan, [bicameral](#), Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act ([HR 1151](#) and [S 756](#)) expands the use of 529 plans to cover postsecondary training and credentialing, such as licenses and nongovernmental certifications. It transforms these college savings plans into career savings plans and creates more viable pathways to career success.

Passed as part of the recent federal tax reform package, this law now expands eligible uses of [tax-favorable 529 savings plans](#) to cover costs associated with workforce training and credentialing programs, such as professional certifications. **Professional-level certifications, such as recreational diving instructor certifications, qualify for the benefits listed under these bills.**

Prior to passage 529 Savings plans could only be used for college savings as well as savings for K-12 education. Previously there were two types of 529 plans: [prepaid tuition plans](#) and [education savings plans](#). All fifty states and the District of Columbia sponsored at least one type of 529 plan. **Prior to passage, training, certifications and other credentials were ineligible under 529 plans.**

The Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act Would Provide Economic Flexibility and Opportunity

This bill provides valuable tax-advantaged resources for workers who pursue career growth, mid-career changes or alternative career pathways, and helps those interested in a professional career in recreational diving. Expanding eligible uses for 529 plans empowers workers of any educational background, skill level or age and benefits all industries and professions that rely on employees with specialized training or recognized credentials.

With implementation, American workers and families can use their 529 plans to help cover:

- Certification program tuition.
- Testing fees, including practice exams.
- Required books and equipment.
- Continuing education and certification renewal; and
- Other requirements needed to obtain and maintain a certification.

This is win for the diving industry and all professional credentialing organizations.

HOW "NO TAXES ON TIPS" LAW COULD IMPACT YOU.

[Impact on Recreational Diving:](#) With the passage of the US' sweeping tax cut and spending package, which was signed into law on July 4, service workers, including those in the diving industry, have the opportunity to avoid tax on tips up to the limits of the law. This will place more money in the pockets of diving instructors, dive leaders and guides and encourage increases in service levels.

There are more than 60 job categories that will qualify for the new "no tax on tips" law ushered in through the recently passed U.S. tax cut and spending package. Service industry workers, ranging from bartenders to golf caddies, and including those in the diving industry, will have the opportunity to receive full payment for their services without being charged taxes on their income. This measure is in effect for tax years 2025 through 2028 and is not a permanent exemption from taxation.

With 60+ categories already on the list of job eligibility, the diving industry may fit into several categories, including:

- Tour guides and escorts
- Travel guides

- Sports and recreation instructors
- Water taxi operators and charter boat workers

Workers who fall under this designation will also qualify for tax deductions of up to \$25,000 in tips if they make less than \$150,000 — or \$300,000 if they're married and filing jointly. The amount workers can deduct is reduced by \$100 for every \$1,000 they make beyond \$150,000.

According to the IRS, workers who complete overtime will also be eligible for deductions:

- **Deduction amount:** A deduction of up to \$12,500 (\$25,000 for those married filing jointly) is available for qualified overtime pay.
- **Qualifying overtime:** The deduction applies to the "half" portion of time-and-a-half compensation for overtime required by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
- **Income limits:** The deduction phases out for taxpayers with a modified adjusted gross income over \$150,000 (\$300,000 for those married filing jointly).
- **Continuing tax obligations:** Overtime pay is still subject to federal payroll taxes, as well as state and local taxes.

Like the new regulation for tips, the amount workers can deduct is reduced if they make more than \$150,000.

How workers will receive the tax benefit

- For 2025: The deductions are retroactive to January 1, 2025. Employers will continue regular tax withholding, and eligible workers will claim the deduction when filing their tax returns in early 2026 to receive their tax savings.
- After 2025: The IRS is expected to release guidance and updated tax forms

for 2026, which may allow workers to adjust their withholding to receive the benefit in each paycheck.

For more information visit the [IRS information here](#).

VISA BOND PILOT PROGRAM COULD AFFECT SOME INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS TO THE U.S.

[Impact on Recreational Diving:](#) Having correct information about this Visa Bond Program will help prevent confusion from potential travelers planning to come to the U.S. for dive vacations or to attend DEMA Show in November. Most countries traditionally attending DEMA Show are NOT impacted, and those who plan to take a dive vacation in the U.S. can review the information here to be assured they will not be subject to this bond.

In August the U.S. State Department announced it will launch a 12-month visa bond pilot program that could affect some international visitors traveling to the U.S. to vacation, or to attend U.S.-based meetings and events. **While most who visit DEMA Show and most who travel to the U.S. to dive are excluded from this concern**, it is well to be aware of the apprehensions some travelers may have, ensuring that there is no confusion on the travelers' ability to come to the U.S.

Under the program, certain applicants for B1/B2 visitor visas from countries with high visa overstay rates (10% or more) may be required to post a refundable bond of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000, at the discretion of consular officers. If the traveler complies with visa terms, the bond will be returned.

Key Details:

- Pilot Dates: August 20, 2025-August 5, 2026.
- Scope: Estimated 2,000 applicants.

- Excluded Countries: This rule excludes travelers from Mexico, Canada, and Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participating countries.

Visa Waiver Program

[The Visa Waiver Program](#) (VWP) enables most citizens or nationals of participating countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. Travelers must have a valid [Electronic System for Travel Authorization \(ESTA\)](#) approval prior to travel and meet all requirements explained below. If you prefer to have a visa in your passport, you may still apply for a visitor (B) visa.

Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015

Under the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015, travelers in the following categories must obtain a visa prior to traveling to the United States as they are no longer eligible to travel under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP):

- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled to or been present in Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, or Yemen on or after March 1, 2011 (with limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country).
- Nationals of VWP countries who have traveled to or been present in Cuba on or after January 12, 2021 (with limited exceptions for travel for diplomatic or military purposes in the service of a VWP country).
- Nationals of VWP countries who are also nationals of Cuba, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria.

Requirements for Using the Visa Waiver Program (VWP)

You must meet **all** the following requirements to travel to the United States on the VWP:

Travel Purpose Must be Permitted on a Visitor (B) Visa. This includes:

Business:

- Consult with business associates
- Attend a scientific, educational, professional, or business convention or conference
- Attend short-term training (you may not be paid by any source in the United States with the exception of expenses incidental to your stay)
- Negotiating a contract

Learn more about [Business Travel to the United States](#).

Tourism:

- Tourism
- Vacation (holiday)
- Visit with friends or relatives
- Medical treatment
- Participation in social events hosted by fraternal, social, or service organizations
- Participation by amateurs in musical, sports, or similar events or contests, if not being paid for participating
- Enrollment in a short recreational course of study, not for credit toward a degree (for example, a two-day diving class while on vacation)

Learn more about [Visitor Visas - Business and Pleasure](#).

Travel Purposes NOT Permitted on Visa Waiver Program – Examples:

- Study for credit
- Employment
- Work as foreign press, radio, film, journalists, or other information media
- Permanent residence in the United States

Must Be a Citizen or National of a VWP Designated Country

You must be a citizen or national of the following countries to be eligible to travel to the United States under the VWP.

- Andorra
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Brunei
- Chile
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Monaco
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway

- Poland
- Portugal
- Qatar
- San Marino
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- United Kingdom

This rule also EXCLUDES travelers from Mexico, Canada, as well as these Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participating countries.

Why it matters:

While limited in scope, this pilot is part of a trend toward more restrictive visa policies. Administration officials have also recently enacted \$250 “Visa Integrity Fee” that would apply to all non-immigrant visa applicants. The fee is essentially structured as a refundable security deposit to encourage compliance with US visa rules, particularly to reduce overstays.

However, its rollout is expected to be delayed, as the Department of Homeland Security has [not yet finalized the procedures for collection of the fee as well as reimbursement](#).

What’s next:

DEMA is monitoring this issue along with groups like U.S. Travel and Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance and will continue advocating for policies that keep the U.S. competitive as a destination for international events.

PORT EVERGLADES DREDGING ACTION

[Impact on Recreational Diving: The Army Corps of Engineers \(ACE\) has been in discussions regarding dredging of Port Everglades for almost a decade. In 2016 DEMA became involved in](#)

litigation to stop this dredging because of the problems caused when ACE dredged PortMiami just a few years earlier, killing off corals in the vicinity. If the current plan to dredge Port Everglades is not altered, similar damage will be caused in the Fort Lauderdale area, damaging diving and the living reef for many years to come.

DEMA became involved with stopping the dredging project in Fort Lauderdale's Port Everglades in 2016. At that time the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) had recently completed a dredging project in PortMiami prior to their proposal to dredge Port Everglades. During the dredging of PortMiami, ACE apparently did not follow proper operational protocols and silted over acres of corals off the coast of Miami, [essentially destroying the coral and the reef structure there](#), which included species that were listed as endangered and at risk, including wiping out pillar corals.

When ACE proposed to use the same protocols in dredging Port Everglades, DEMA joined with non-profit environmental groups Miami Waterkeeper, Earth Justice, The Center for Biological Diversity, and The Florida Wildlife Federation in filing litigation to stop ACE from moving forward until proper environmental assessments were completed and proper precautions were in place. The litigation stopped the dredging project and DEMA has participated on-and-off again since 2016 in preventing ACE from moving forward with this project until the conditions of the litigation were met.

The risks on this project are many, including that a faulty dredging plan and operation will wipe out endangered corals off the coast of Fort Lauderdale, as well as killing off one of the last populations of Queen Conch in Florida/ US waters. It is currently one of the few places where healthy staghorn coral can be found.

Recently ACE again attempted to push past these environmental and operational requirements, this time with support of lawmakers from the region. DEMA has again joined with our partners in this effort to provide information on this issue to both ACE and lawmakers. This latest campaign is just beginning at this writing, but the Press Release announcing the effort [can be found here](#).

DEMA will continue monitoring developments on this important issue.

SUMMARY

2025 has again been an active year for DEMA's Public Policy Committee and Staff. Public Policy has long-term impacts on international, regional, and local dive business. DEMA and the Public Policy Committee recommend that all diving businesses become involved with these important issues.

Be sure to subscribe to DEMA's [Public Policy Digest](#). Issued monthly at no cost to subscribers. [A free subscription can be found here.](#) ■





GO DIVE NOW CONSUMER MARKETING CAMPAIGN

One of DEMA’s core objectives is to engage in marketing programs that promote recreational scuba diving of all kinds, create new customers, drive consumers into retail stores and resorts, and encourage customer retention.

In 2016, DEMA launched the *Go Dive Now* consumer campaign to advance these goals. In 2025, DEMA has continued to focus on providing Members with regular access to valuable consumer marketing tools and support that can empower them to grow their customer base and keep their current customers engaged.

GO DIVE NOW WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

DEMA has remained committed to consumer outreach by maintaining access to the [GoDiveNow.com](https://godivenow.com) website, which features active listings of DEMA Member stores and dive destinations.

Leads from GoDiveNow.com to DEMA Member Stores

Since January 2019, the [GoDiveNow.com](https://godivenow.com) website has incorporated lead generation functionality. The website’s [Dive Store Finder](#) and [Dive Vacation Finder](#) features help consumers



locate a DEMA Member store or travel provider in the area of their interest. Results from a consumer’s search provide them with a list of qualifying businesses. By clicking on a listed DEMA Member store or travel provider link, a pop-up allows the consumer to provide their contact information so the DEMA Member business can follow up with them about their goods, services, and/or destination. Members are able to customize their listing with specific details about their operation, such as the services they offer, contact information, and business logo.

Go Dive Now Social Media Engagement

The *Go Dive Now* social media accounts remain an engaging way to inspire both potential and active divers. By showcasing the excitement and adventure of diving, the *Go Dive Now* social media channels aim to spark curiosity among non-divers and provide seasoned divers with continuous motivation to dive more often. From stunning underwater photography to educational content, these posts highlight the thrill and accessibility of diving.

DEMA also leverages *Go Dive Now*’s social media channels to support its members by directing followers to [GoDiveNow.com](https://godivenow.com), where they can locate DEMA Member stores and dive destinations through the [Dive Store Finder](#) and [Dive Vacation Finder](#) features. *Go Dive Now*’s social media presence helps drive traffic to member businesses and dive resorts.

In addition, the *Go Dive Now* accounts provide timely, valuable information on diving safety and the benefits of diving, helping to build a

community of informed, passionate divers. With content that appeals to a wide range of interests—whether it’s travel, adventure, finding serenity, or simply a love for the ocean—*Go Dive Now*’s social media presence continues to fuel the diving lifestyle and promote the growth of the diving community. Member Resources

DEMA is dedicated to equipping member retail stores and dive destinations with effective marketing resources to help them connect with potential divers and engage with their current customers.

MEMBER RESOURCES

DEMA is dedicated to equipping member retail stores and dive destinations with effective marketing resources to help them connect with potential divers and engage with their current customers.

Go Dive Now Marketing Digest

In 2025, DEMA’s monthly marketing e-newsletter, the *Go Dive Now Marketing Digest*, has continued to provide its subscribers—both members and non-members—free, ready-to-use social media graphics and

content to reach affluent, active potential divers. The newsletter aims to provide content that helps keep current customers engaged while attracting new ones. Diving professionals are encouraged to [subscribe to the Go Dive Now Marketing Digest](#). An archive of the suggested social media content and images is [available online](#).

In addition to the curated social media content, the *Go Dive Now Marketing Digest* also includes engaging video lessons led by DEMA’s Communications & Publications Chief, Rachelle Reimers. These lessons offer expert insights and actionable strategies to enhance marketing efforts, making them both simple and effective.



[Video marketing lesson topics](#)

this year have included:

- What a TikTok Ban Could Mean for Your Business (Even if You Aren't Using It)
- Social Media Changes. Your Email List is Forever.
- Turn Website Visitors into Loyal Customers—No Chasing Required.
- Struggling to Choose a Lead Magnet? Start Here.
- Boost Your Visibility with a Google Business Profile
- 3 Simple SEO Tips You Can Use Today
- Instagram's New SEO Update Can Help Increase Your Visibility
- Stop Losing Viewers—Add Captions to Your Videos
- Don't Wait! Prep Your Holiday Marketing Now

[An archive](#) of all previous marketing lesson videos dating back to August 2022 is available on DEMA.org.



DEMA MEMBERS CAN USE *GO DIVE NOW* MATERIALS FOR FREE

DEMA continues to provide Members with complimentary access to advertising materials through the Member-exclusive [Go Dive Now Toolkit](#). From video commercial templates to email graphics, these resources have been designed by a professional advertising agency exclusively for DEMA Members' utilization. Using these complimentary materials, Members can produce their own cost-effective advertising campaigns. Members can access these FREE materials by logging into their *Go Dive Now* Member Toolkit on DEMA.org. ■





RETAILER ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

JEFF CINCIRIPINO, CHAIR

The role of the Retailer Engagement Committee is to explore ways that DEMA can assist the dive retail sector and engage retailers in the process. The 2025 Retail Engagement Committee consists of individuals working from different regions who work with, or own, dive retail companies. These operations also vary in size and contract with various diving-related vendors (e.g., manufacturers and training organizations). Each member of this committee brings their own experience and expertise to retail issues under discussion.

As the primary audience for DEMA Show includes retailers, retail staff and instructional staff, this Committee also contributes to the development and production of DEMA Show, especially the in-person professional development components of the event.

The 2025 Retailer Resource Committee includes: Jennetta Adams, International Scuba; Robin Bostater, Kaizen Scuba; Jeff Cinciripino, Scuba

Educational Alliance of CT; Patrick Hammer, Dive Right In Scuba; Bob Hathaway, Odyssey Scuba & Travel, LLC; Brooke Speedy, Leaird's Underwater Service; and Rich Thomas, International Scuba.

For 2025 the Retailer Engagement Committee is responsible for the following objectives:

- Begin a review of professional and peer-presented speaker proposals for professional development sessions at DEMA Show.
- Complete the assessment of professional and peer-presented speaker proposals and determine which professional development sessions will be presented at DEMA Show 2025.
- For DEMA Show 2025, achieve an overall average evaluation score of 4.3 for DEMA-sponsored seminars.
- Working with the Research Committee, develop and deploy an operational survey in the U.S. to determine the impact of liability

insurance rates on dive operators, stemming from the 2023 Small Passenger Vessel Act.

- Working with the DEMA Show Committee, submit recommendations to the DEMA Board regarding location for DEMA Show 2030.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS

The Retailer Engagement Committee reviews and makes recommendations for all DEMA's proposed retail professional development programs. The process consists of reviewing submitted speaker/topic proposals, which include education outcomes and objectives, relevance to the current market, and speaker quality. In 2025 the Committee reviewed more than 120 speaker proposals.

The following topics were selected for DEMA Show 2025:

- "Generation Speak": You Can't Connect with Customers If You Don't Know Who They Are
- Dive Into the Future: Scuba Diving for the Next Generation
- Shoot, Edit, Share: A Guide to Social Media Video Success
- From Shore to Store: 50 Touchpoints to Level Up Your Dive Business
- How to Get the Click: 10 Proven Ways to Get Your Marketing Messages Noticed
- What Your Customers REALLY Want!
- 5 Tips for Generating and Responding to Online Reviews
- The Two Nerds Present: The Top 10 Tech Things You Need to Know for 2026
- Beyond ChatGPT: 24 Fabulously Fresh Ways to Use Generative AI for Dive Industry Pros
- Harnessing The "Gray Tsunami" for Your Dive Operation – A Demographic Shift That Continues to Grow
- 25 Ways to "Blue" Your Business – And Make More Green
- Going Gonzo: How Unconventional Marketing Can Grow Your Business
- AI at Work: Hidden Risks and Smart Safeguards for the Dive Industry

- Stocking the Right Gear: Mastering Inventory Planning for Dive Shops
- Adapting to the Tides: Building a Flexible Dive Business
- In with the New - Considerations for Entering New Dealer Agreements
- Mentoring: A Talent Strategy for Your Dive Business
- Deep Dive into Leadership Development
- "Sell It Like It's Hot: Closing Deals with What's in Stock"
- Service That Sizzles: Create the Kind of Experience People Fly Back For
- Sales vs. Marketing? Let's End the Family Feud and Win Together!
- What's Your Leadership Blind Spot? Come Find Out!
- The Truth Behind the Filter: Mental Health, Business, and Showing Up For Real
- Dive Trip or Travel Adventure?
- Mission Underwater: Embedding Core Values in Every Level of Your Dive Shop

LIABILITY INSURANCE DATA

In August, the DEMA Research Committee had the opportunity to develop and test the operational survey to measure the impact of liability insurance rates on dive operators by sending the survey to more than 20 retailers in Texas. This test was part of an effort to quickly provide data to Texas lawmakers in Washington DC, to inform them of the issues caused by the 2023 Small Passenger Vessel Act. With this test, a decision was made to modify the survey appropriately and deploy it prior to the Labor Day holiday to DEMA Member Travel Providers and Retailers. DEMA received a response from more than 25% of targeted members (95% confidence level, confidence interval +/- 11%).

The results were as expected: the Small Passenger Vessel Act has had an enormous negative impact on the recreational diving business in the U.S. The results are included on [pages 23 & 24](#) of this annual report. ■



RESEARCH COMMITTEE

WILLIAM CLINE, CHAIR

DEMA's research role includes providing Members with pertinent industry data that helps their businesses. Providing market and Industry research is critical for all trade associations, and DEMA views this responsibility as a central part of the association's activities.

The 2025 Research Committee consists of DEMA Members that have interest, experience, and an understanding that a variety of market research is needed for diving businesses to be successful. Research critical for the diving industry includes DEMA Show-related topics, market related issues, diving customer matters and retail-related inquiries. The 2025 Research Committee includes: William Cline (Chair), Cline Group Advertising, Inc.; Ben Collins, Garmin; JoAnn Haack, Divers Alert Network, Inc.; Shelli Hendricks, Blue Horizons Solutions; Jason Leggatt, Shearwater Research Inc.; Lily Mak, Enchanted Sea Images; Charles Maricle,

XK Sports; Jeff Mondle, PADI; David Prichard, Enchanted Sea Images, Inc.; and Lee Rand, Avelo.

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

At the heart of "marketing" is the need to understand the dive customer, how to communicate with them, and knowing which message will generate the greatest response in a cost-effective manner. DEMA's Research Committee guides several ongoing research projects annually for DEMA Member use. All members of the diving community can benefit from DEMA's large-scale research information.

Most everyone in the diving industry has an idea of their own customers; retailers see who walks into the store and purchases the equipment and training they sell; manufacturers have a good understanding of who purchases their products through warranty registrations and information from their retail dealers; training organizations

can easily check their own certification information for demographic details, places where their customers live, and more. The question for the industry and for DEMA is how to pull all this information together to help enable industry growth. Having marketing data from all sources in the diving industry, including data from actual divers is critical, but only if it translates into marketing action that helps members. That's where the Research Committee excels.

During 2025 the Research Committee Objectives included:

- Continuing the DEMA Certification Census
- Providing data on households and potential customers to DEMA Member Stores.
- Understanding more about the impact of international dive shows on DEMA Show
- Obtaining information on how the federal Small Passenger Vessel Act (SPVA) has impacted the industry.
- Continuing the Manufacturing Purchase Index.
- Contribute to conducting initial strategy research – Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats.
- Obtaining information on the economics of the Diving Industry

Each of these is discussed.

REVIEWING THE DEMA CERTIFICATION CENSUS

Thanks to participating certification organizations, data on the number of new diver open water certifications in the U.S. and Caribbean has been readily available to the Industry each year since 2003. The Certification Census includes data exclusively on U.S.-based Open Water-level diver certifications (as defined by the Recreational Scuba Training Council [RSTC]). This statistic is a measure of growth for the Industry and is indicative of the health of the sport in the U.S.

All DEMA-Member training organizations are invited to participate, although in 2025 not all did. The participating certification organizations for 2025 are SDI/TDI, SEI, and PADI. Taken together, these organizations represent most of the Open Water-level certifications issued in the U.S. and U.S. territory market.

The cooperative effort between all participating certification organizations includes providing their certification information to an independent, third-party auditing firm. Open Water certification numbers are reported by the third-party administrator (TPA) to the Industry in aggregate total, only after the TPA does a thorough review of the data, removes any duplicated customer records that appear across or from within agencies, and receives written verification of the final numbers from each reporting training organization. The process is designed to make the Certification Census totally anonymous regarding the new diver's training organization affiliation and to produce an accurate accounting of the total Open Water divers from within the U.S. Neither the DEMA staff nor members of the DEMA Board have access to individual training organization totals, only the aggregate total.

PROVIDING DATA ON HOUSEHOLDS AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS TO DEMA MEMBER STORES

In 2025 DEMA began providing member retailers with a "Neighborhood Brief" which describes the number and market viability of households within a 30-minute drive area of their dive store's address. The information provided covers:

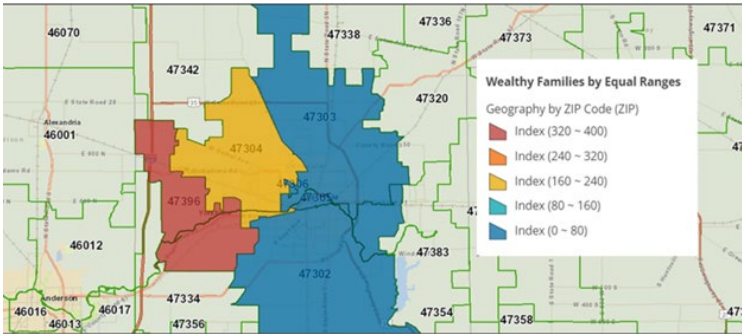
- Top three household segment-types found within a 30-minute drive, ranked by "Index" number, and including a summary of the potential customer households in the region.
- A comparison of the households in the neighborhood to the data found in [DEMA's Consumer Household Analysis](#),

which included an examination of more than 10,000 diver households.

- A map of the area in immediate vicinity to the dive center, with information listed regarding the high value Zip Codes.
- A population and household summary document – indicating population and household growth in the drive time, compared to overall growth in the US.
- A listing of the zip codes and index values within the 30-minute drive time for the household types with the highest index rank, as well as a listing of zip codes and index values for the households in the neighborhood compared to DEMA’s target household segments as determined by [DEMA’s Household Analysis](#).
- A listing of all household segments found in the area along with their indices, specific to the 30-minute drive time from the store. This is an indicator of which are the households most likely to buy in the neighborhood compared to the overall U.S. for each household segment.
- Summaries are found for each of the top three household segments within the drive time listed.
- Data by Zip Codes within the 30-minute drive time:
 - Population
 - Number of households
 - Families
 - Average Household size
 - Median age range
 - Median HH Income
 - Estimated HHs by Effective Buying Income
- Encouragement to start a media campaign
- A “How to” section on using the data found in the Neighborhood Brief.

HOW IS THIS DATA USEFUL?

Analyzing a set of current customer records creates precise profiles of these customers and literally maps out the specific neighborhoods where more customers like them can be located. PRIZM, the software used, along with Claritas 360, identifies 68 different household types enabling the diving industry to target them. Combined with segmenting consumers by activities in which they participate helps transform raw consumer and demographic data into actionable data in a quick and accurate way.



CONTINUATION OF THE MANUFACTURING PURCHASE INDEX (MPI) RESEARCH REPORT

Since 2023 DEMA has provided a business indicator for the manufacturing sector. The methodology for the Manufacturing Purchase Index (MPI) is identical to that used by the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) which is commonly cited and utilized within the U.S. general manufacturing sector and investment community. The MPI does not require reporting specific sales figures but provides a leading trend indicator to understand more fully the state of orders and inventories from diving’s manufacturing sector.

Background

In the United States the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) began using a “Purchasing Manager’s Index” (PMI) in 1948 to assist in understanding data for the manufacturing sector.

03 Movers & Shakers

Wealthy Older Mostly w/o Kids

Movers & Shakers is home to America's business class, a wealthy suburban world of dual-income couples who are highly educated, typically between the ages of 45 and 64. Given its high percentage of executives and white-collar professionals, there's a decided business bent to this segment as they frequently peruse websites like slate.com and WSJ.com. During their minimal downtime, you can find them vacationing in Europe or hitting the slopes.



Social Group: S1 - Elite Suburbs

Lifestage Group: M1 - Affluent Empty Nests

2025 Statistics

US Households: 1,793,029
Median HH Income: \$171,436

Lifestyle Traits:

- > Drives a BMW
- > Eats at Mellow Mushroom
- > Shops at REI
- > Has a child in college
- > Uses National car rental
- > Watches Better Call Saul
- > Listens to Classic Hits/Classic Rock

Demographics Traits:

Urbanicity: Suburban
Income: Wealthy
Income Producing Assets: Millionaires
Household Technology: 2 Above Average
Age Ranges: Age 45-64
Presence of Kids: Mostly w/o Kids
Homeownership: Homeowners
Employment Levels: Management and Professional
Education Levels: Graduate Plus

US by County

This map highlights each County where Movers & Shakers households are found



Top 5 Counties

Code	Name	Index		% Comp	% Pen	Index
51059	Fairfax County	758	Quintile 1	56.64	6.16	291
06041	Marin County	741	Quintile 2	22.85	2.38	113
51600	Fairfax city	660	Quintile 3	12.37	1.3	61
51610	Falls Church city	595	Quintile 4	6.66	0.7	33
51107	Loudoun County	593	Quintile 5	1.38	0.15	7



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CLARITAS PRIZM Premier
Segment 03: Movers & Shakers

The PMI is used extensively today by the U.S. venture capital and business communities seeking to invest in U.S. manufacturing companies. The published data from ISM is about PAST orders and other activities but is also used as a means of predicting broader economic issues. Even though the data is for past orders, inventories and other figures, the PMI acts as a leading indicator of manufacturing output that predicts economic recession or expansion of industries.

The PMI is a simple measurement tool; companies can report whether specific aspects of the manufacturing business are increasing, decreasing, or have remained unchanged during a given period. In effect this is a “trend analysis.”

While PMI gathers data from a long list of categories within the traditional manufacturing sector. **DEMA recommended that Dive Manufacturers report an abbreviated dataset**, limiting the requested dive manufacturing data to **quarterly** reporting in the following areas:

- New Orders: reflects the levels of new orders from customers.
- Inventories: reflects the increases and/or decreases in inventory levels.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO THE DIVING INDUSTRY?

This manufacturing data can assist with critical decision making for ALL parts of the diving industry and can be used in conjunction with data on certifications as well as on other customer data. It is PAST data but can help with trends. For example:

Hard goods manufacturers and suppliers:

- A regulator manufacturer makes production decisions based on the new future orders it expects from retailers. Those new regulator orders drive management’s purchasing

decisions about dozens of component parts such as high-or low-pressure seats/poppets, hoses, and orings. Existing inventory balances also drive the amount of production the manufacturer needs to complete new orders and to keep some inventory on hand at the end of the month.

- Parts Suppliers may also make decisions based on this important data. A parts supplier for a regulator manufacturer follows the data to estimate the amount of future demand for its products, including raw materials such as plastic or rubber. Parts suppliers may also be interested in seeing an index on inventory, which affects the amount of production its manufacturing clients must generate.
- MPI information about supply and demand affects planning for manufacturing budgets, managing staffing levels, and forecasting cash flow.

Other members of the diving industry can also benefit from this important data:

- Retailers can use this data as it reflects product availability (especially soft goods) for new customers learning to dive.
- The data can be used by certification organizations as an indicator of trends in purchasing. Divers that obtain continuing diver education also tend to purchase more equipment.
- Divers with additional education also tend to travel to dive, which can assist with both liveaboard and land-based dive resort forecasting.
- This data is also important for current retailers seeking to expand and informs and encourages new business growth for all retailers: brick and mortar and online.

- **All members of the diving industry benefit because DEMA has data that can be utilized to help legislatures better understand the diving industry. The diving community CANNOT easily discuss or change detrimental laws without being able to discuss the current status of manufacturing and other research-based statistics.**

In 2025, for the second year, DEMA gathered data **quarterly** using two data points for equipment as defined below:

- As compared to the previous quarter.
- As compared to the same quarter in the previous year

For example, when reporting whether orders are up, the same or down, the comparison for Q1 2025 can be made with Q1 and Q4 of 2024. In this way the data will reflect the changes per quarter DURING the year, as well as changes from the same time in the previous year. Combined, these figures help the user understand the seasonality of the dive manufacturing business and how it impacts the reporting companies.

All data is reported to a third-party administrator (TPA) under contract with DEMA to maintain anonymity of the data with respect to each reporting company. Only aggregated data is reported to the industry. Neither DEMA nor any individual company sees any individual company’s data. Once committed, DEMA will ask that the company continue to report on the selected categories for each quarter for the calendar year and provide rewards for participation as described below.

With current labor and shipping issues continuing in this and other sectors, reducing reporting categories to essentials that help predict the health of the manufacturing sector may prove a more successful data collection strategy than requesting detailed numbers monthly.

How is the Index Calculated?

Using the same approach as the traditional Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI) the DEMA MPI is calculated as follows: $MPI = (P1 * 1) + (P2 * 0.5) + (P3 * 0)$, Where:

P1 = percentage of answers reporting an improvement
P2 = percentage of answers reporting no change
P3 = percentage of answers reporting a deterioration

The proposed MPI is a percentage from 0 to 100 and is reported quarterly. An MPI above 50 percent indicates an expansion of new orders or inventories, as compared with the previous quarter. An MPI reading under 50 percent indicates a contraction, and a reading at 50 percent indicates no change. The further from 50 percent (in either direction) the greater the level of change has occurred in the reporting period.

Example:
Assumes 10 Manufacturers report quarterly to MPI, in the Category of REGULATORS.

*6 report an increase in new orders of regulators (P1)
2 report no change from last quarter in new orders of regulators (P2)
2 report a decrease in new orders of regulators (P3)*

Solution:
 $MPI = (P1 * 1) + (P2 * 0.5) + (P3 * 0)$
 $MPI = (60\% * 1) + (20\% * .5) + (20\% * 0) = 70\%.$
Since this MPI is above 50% for the quarter, it indicates a net positive quarterly growth for new orders of regulators from the reporting Manufacturers.

Once aggregated by the TPA, data becomes available to the industry in table format.

Definitions of Equipment Reported:

CATEGORY	EQUIPMENT TYPE	DEFINITIONS
Soft Goods	Masks	All styles of scuba masks. Excludes swim masks and goggles without nose pocket
	Fins – All	Paddle blade, Split blade, full foot, heel strap, other configurations
	Snorkels	Any style
	Snorkel Sets	Sets including at least a mask and snorkel
Exposure Protection	Wetsuits	One-piece, two-piece, separate jackets. Excludes hooded vests
	Drysuits	Any style
	Booties, Gloves & Hoods	For use with wetsuits and any units designed for drysuit use. Includes hooded vests.
Hard Goods	Regulators	Includes 1st and 2nd stage sets, Octopus or Alternate Air Sources and breathable inflators not attached to BCs.
	BCs – All	All except technical diving wings and plates. Includes snorkeling vests.
	Technical-related	Side-mount harnesses, tec “wings” and tec back plates
	Computers	All – wrist, hose/console mount
	Analog Gauges	Depth and pressure. Excludes watches and timing devices
Accessories and Bags	Accessories	Clips, anti-fog, fin straps, mask straps, dive flags, tools, reels, mouthpieces, logbooks, slates, etc.
	Bags	All dive gear bags, rucksacks, backpacks, dive-related, mask or other accessory bags

Data Availability

Data is now available to members in various ways, including for those participating and those not participating. As required by law, data is also available to non-members at non-member pricing. Data can be obtained from the [DEMA Store](#). Equipment Category Reports are free to members and available at non-member rates for others. Equipment Type Reports, which are more detailed, are available to Members at Member pricing, while others can obtain Equipment Type Reports at non-member pricing.

No equipment-intensive recreation can operate for long without having access to manufacturing data. It should be obvious that this information is critical to growing the industry. DEMA and the Research and Manufacturing Committees look forward to continuing this reporting process.

UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL DIVE SHOWS ON DEMA SHOW

One of the efforts of the Research Committee in conjunction with the International Membership Committee is to gain a better understanding of how international dive shows are viewed by DEMA Show exhibitors. The survey is out during DEMA Show 2025 and will help DEMA gain a better understanding of how the proliferation of dive shows around the world is impacting DEMA. This information is covered in detail in the International Membership Committee section of this Annual Report.

OBTAINING INFORMATION ON HOW THE FEDERAL SMALL PASSENGER VESSEL ACT (SPVA) HAS IMPACTED THE INDUSTRY

The DEMA Retailer Engagement Committee was asked to participate with the Research Committee in the development of an operational survey to measure the impact of liability insurance rates

on dive operators. An opportunity arose to send the draft survey to more than 20 retailers in Texas, allowing the Research Committee to test the survey without additional comment from the Retail Engagement Committee. The results of the survey can be found in the Retailer Engagement Committee section of this Annual Report.

The results were as expected: the Small Passenger Vessel Act has had an enormous negative impact on the recreational diving business in the U.S.

CONTRIBUTING TO CONDUCTING INITIAL STRATEGY RESEARCH – STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT)

The Research Committee contributed to the effort to obtain preliminary information from the DEMA Board of Directors regarding the analysis of DEMA’s and the Industry’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. That information can be found in the What is DEMA section of this Annual Report.

OBTAINING INFORMATION ON THE ECONOMICS OF THE DIVING INDUSTRY

At this writing DEMA and the Research Committee are analyzing the objectives needed to participate in a longer-term study to understand the economics of the Diving Industry. More on this important project will become available in the future.

Having data from all sources in the diving industry, including data from actual divers is critical, but only if it translates into marketing action that helps members. DEMA’s Research Committee continues to work annually towards the goal of providing actionable data for the industry. ■



INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

PETER SYMES, CHAIR

DEMA’s continuing mission is “Bringing businesses together to grow the Diving Industry worldwide.” With a “global” or “international” expansion in mind, DEMA formed a volunteer Committee in 2021 to evaluate how it might grow international membership including participation in DEMA Show.

In 2025 the DEMA International Membership Committee consisted of Jenny Collister, Reef and Rainforest Travel; Derik Crotts, Professional Scuba Schools; Terry Cummins, Terry Cummins International Business Consulting; Bill Doran, Scuba Educators International; Cassandra Johnson, Breezeway Bubbles Scuba; Dan Orr, Dan Orr Consulting; Arlindo Serrao, Dive Portugal; Peter Symes, X-Ray Dive Magazine (Chair); and Steve Weaver, Dream Weaver Travel.

This Committee seeks to increase the number of International DEMA Members. Most international

members join DEMA in connection with DEMA Show, but DEMA has many more offerings beyond the Show that can be valuable during the rest of the year. Still, the Show is a main attraction for international participants and DEMA does encourage the use of this benefit for all members of the professional diving community.

OBJECTIVES

Overall, members of the International Membership Committee remain focused on obtaining more international attendance and exhibiting at DEMA Show. While this is helpful, it does not provide more guidance in obtaining additional INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS, except that most of these companies will likely join DEMA to obtain the member discount for attending and exhibiting at DEMA Show. Accordingly, the following objectives are recommended:

1. Develop a research project in conjunction with the DEMA Research Committee with a goal of understanding more about participation by DEMA Show exhibitors in dive shows outside the United States.
2. Determine a strategic recommendation for international membership for presentation to the DEMA Board of Directors.

With the implementation of tariffs and international travel concerns, to date this committee has also addressed:

- Travel in-bound to the U.S.
- Impact of tariffs on manufacturers and distributors.
- Creating benefits for international members: Dive Travel Data and an International Orientation and Resource Hub for DEMA Show.

TRAVEL IN-BOUND TO THE U.S.

There is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding travel into the U.S., and, specifically, how it might impact attendance or exhibiting at DEMA Show. Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to travel to the United States for tourism or business must first obtain a visa, usually a nonimmigrant visa for a temporary stay. Visitor visas are nonimmigrant visas for persons who want to enter the United States temporarily for business (B-1 visa), for tourism (B-2 visa), or for a combination of both purposes (B-1/B-2 visa). Examples of temporary business include:

- Attending business meetings or consultations
- Attending a business convention or conference
- Negotiating contracts

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM (VWP)

Citizens of participating countries may be eligible to travel to the United States for short temporary business visits without a visa through the Visa Waiver Program.

To be eligible, travelers must be a citizen or national of the following countries:

- Andorra
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Brunei
- Chile
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Monaco
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Qatar
- San Marino
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- United Kingdom

CANADIAN & BERMUDIAN CITIZENS

While citizens of Canada and Bermuda generally do not need visas to attend or exhibit at DEMA Show, some purposes of travel may require a visa

To help clarify requirements, the DEMA Show website highlighted the use of the U.S. Department of State [Visa Wizard](#). This tool provides guidance on whether or not a visa is required by a visitor from outside the U.S. and should be used in conjunction with information from the consular officer at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where the visitor applies.

VISA BONDS

In August the U.S. State Department announced it will launch a 12-month visa bond “pilot program” that could affect some international visitors traveling to the U.S. to vacation, or to attend U.S.-based meetings and events. **While most who visit DEMA Show and most who travel to the U.S. to dive are excluded from this concern**, it is well to be aware of the apprehensions some travelers may have, ensuring that there is no confusion on the travelers’ ability to come to the U.S.

Under the program, certain applicants for B1/B2 visitor visas from countries with high visa overstay rates (10% or more) may be required to post a refundable bond of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000, at the discretion of consular officers. If the traveler complies with visa terms, the bond will be returned.

Key Details:

- Pilot Dates: August 20, 2025 – August 5, 2026.
- Scope: Estimated 2,000 applicants.
- Excluded Countries: This rule excludes travelers from Mexico, Canada, and Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participating countries.

H-1B VISAS

Although it is unlikely to affect members of the diving industry, recent rulemaking has included changes in issuance of H-1B visas. These visas have drawn increasing attention, particularly in the tech and computer science industry, in which tech companies such as Google, Apple, Meta, and others have relied heavily on visas. Many critics say the system has been abused to the detriment of American workers.

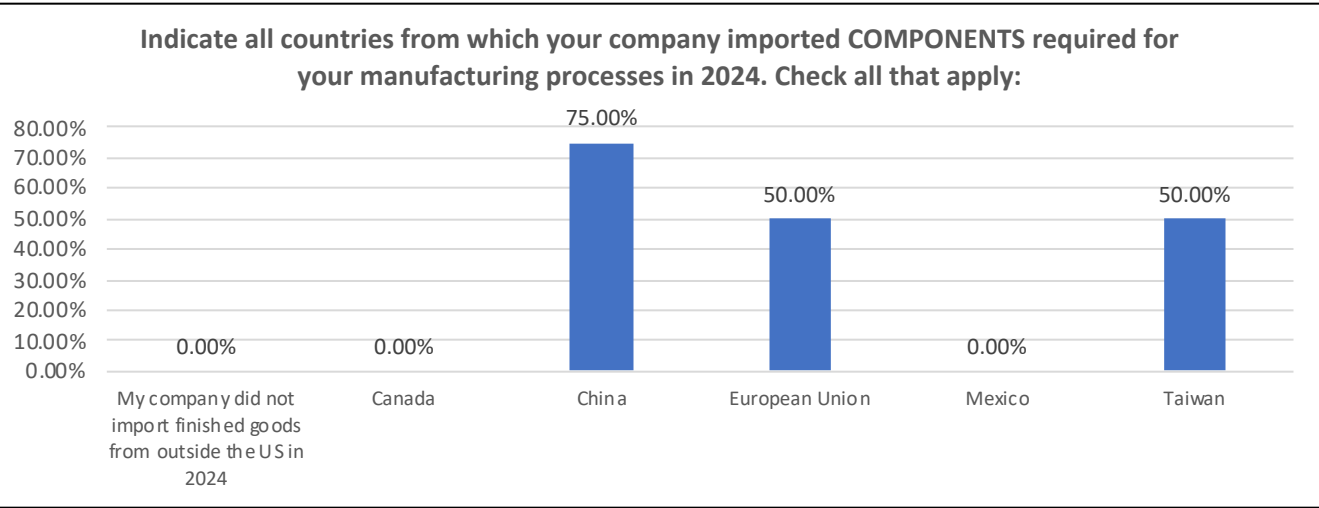
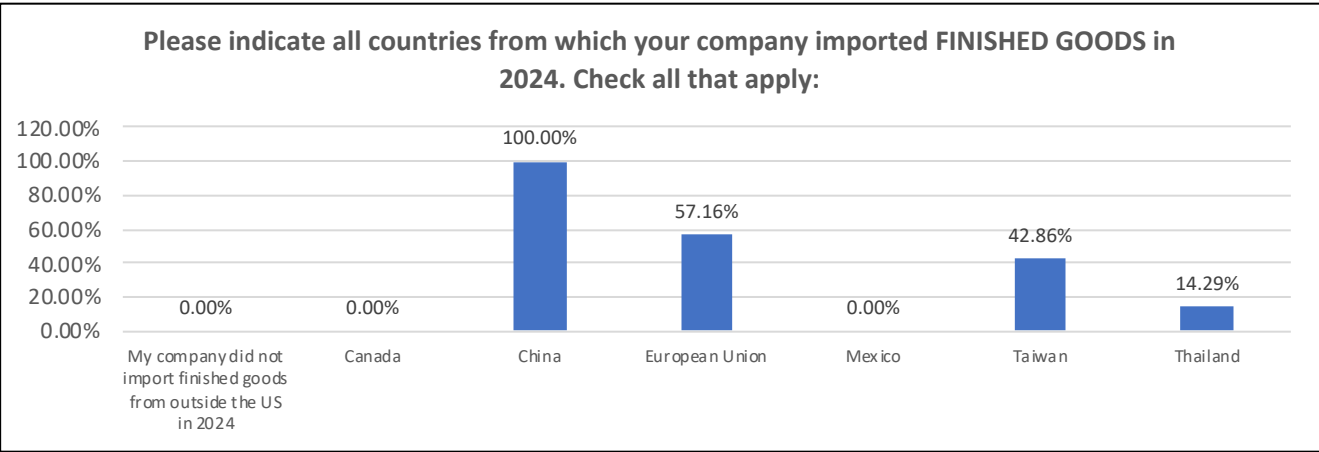
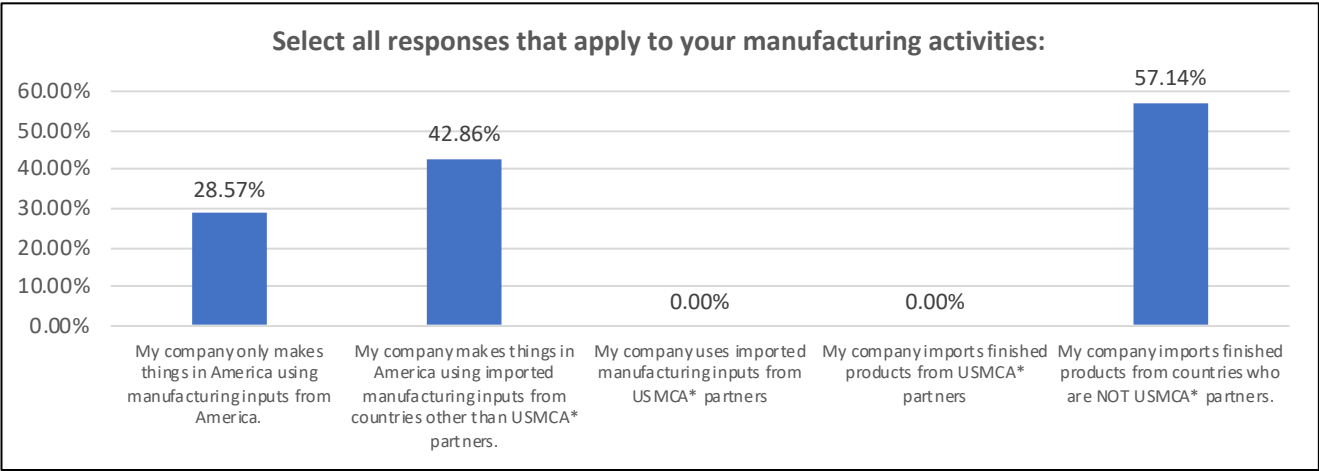
[A White House fact sheet](#) on the presidential proclamation states that U.S. companies are “laying off their American technology workers and seemingly replacing them with H-1B workers.” The fact sheet notes that the substantial rise in H-1B workers in tech-based fields, stating that these workers made up 32 percent of the IT industry in 2003, while in recent years, that figure has exceeded 65 percent.

A recent proclamation requires that H-1B visa applicants pay a fee of \$100,000 USD. The fee is a significant increase from the current application fee of \$215 and is designed to return the program to its original focus of “additive, high-skilled” applicants.

In September the White House clarified that a plan to charge a \$100,000 fee for H-1B visa applicants will apply only to new visas. According to the White House, this is NOT an annual fee. It’s a one-time fee that applies only to new visas, not renewals, and not current holders. H-1B holders who are currently outside the United States won’t be charged \$100,000 to reenter.

IMPACT OF TARIFFS ON DIVE MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

Amidst the U.S.’ tariff discussions in the spring, a survey was distributed to DEMA-member manufacturers and distributors to learn more about how changes in tariffs might impact the diving industry. With concerns about DEMA Show international attendees, the largest



percentages of whom come from Canada and Mexico, as well as how these tariffs could impact U.S. dive companies, the results indicate (unsurprisingly) that a majority of responding U.S. companies obtain component parts and finished goods from China, Taiwan, other parts of Asia, and the European Union.

The current U.S. administration has made several changes on tariffs from China and the European Union. DEMA and the industry are following these issues to see how they will impact the diving industry over the course of the next several months.

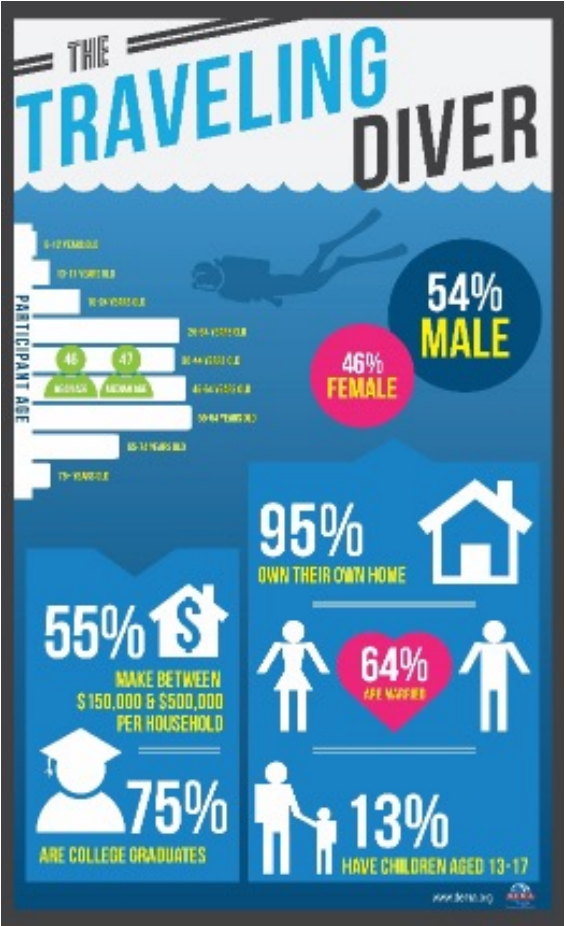
CREATING BENEFITS FOR INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS

While recognizing that international membership is driven by participation in DEMA Show, this committee approved several additional benefits to encourage international membership:

Availability of Dive Travel Data

DEMA has conducted a study on dive consumers in the U.S. who purchase dive travel and promoted this information to the international dive community. Many from the international dive community join DEMA to help them reach a U.S. market, including utilizing DEMA Show for this purpose.

With more than 7,500 respondents, DEMA has determined that those who travel to dive have the following characteristics, each compared to the U.S. national average. The index number presented is calculated by dividing the Group % by the National % and multiplying by 100. The index indicates representation in the population: An index of 100, compared to the U.S. population indicates an average presence of the category. An index less than 100 indicates underrepresentation of the group within the covered category. An index greater than 100 indicates the group has a greater-than-average presence in the category.

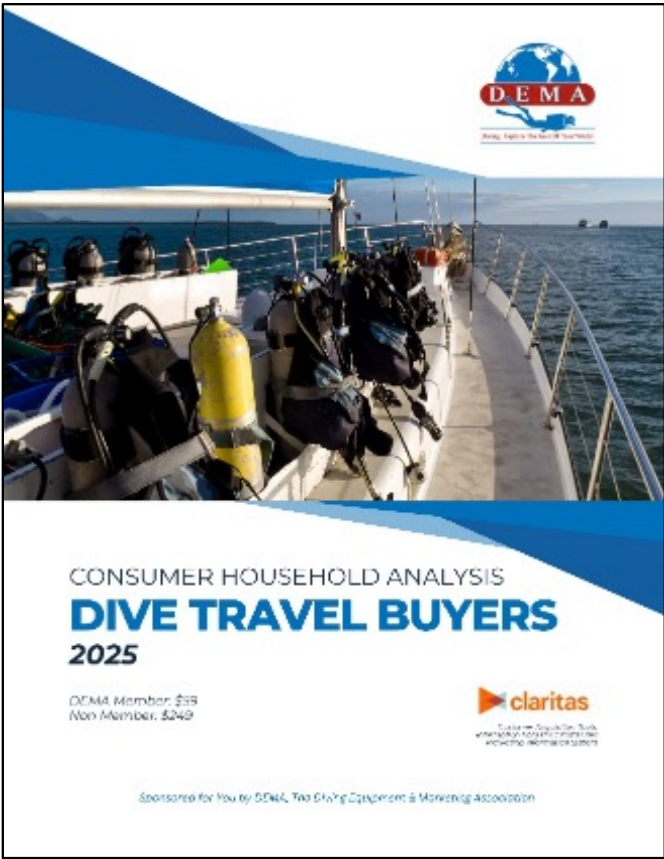


Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Age			
18-24 Years	0.5	3.9	12
25-34 Years	3.0	14.6	20
35-44 Years	7.7	17.3	45
45-54 Years	11.8	17.7	67
55-64 Years	38.4	19.2	200
65-74	30.3	20.6	147
75+	8.4	6.8	124

Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Household Income			
<\$10,000	0.0	5.8	0
\$10,000 - \$19,000	0.0	7.4	0
\$20,000-\$29,000	0.0	9.1	0
\$30,000-\$39,000	0.0	9.0	0
\$40,000-\$49,000	0.9	7.7	11
\$50,000-\$74,000	6.7	16.1	42
\$75,000-\$99,000	10.9	12.1	90
\$100,000-\$149,000	26.6	16.1	166
\$150,000 - \$199,000	20.2	7.2	283
\$200,000-\$249,000	16.5	4.9	337
\$250,000-\$499,000	15.1	3.81	396
\$500,000+	3.0	0.94	318

Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Marital Status			
Never Married	23.9	34.0	70
Married, Spouse Present	61.7	45.3	136
Married, Spouse Absent	2.4	4.34	56
Divorced	7.4	10.73	69
Widowed	4.5	5.57	80

Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Presence and Age of Children			
Children 6 to 12 Years	8.2	17.5	47
Children 13 to 17 Years	13.0	17.6	74



Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Home Ownership Status			
Renter	4.6	30.6	15
Homeowner	94.8	66.3	143

Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Market Value of Home			
<\$50,000	0.3	5.0	7
\$50,000-\$99,000	0.4	5.1	7
\$100,000-\$149,000	0.7	6.6	11
\$150,000-\$199,000	1.5	6.5	23
\$200,000-\$499,000	32.8	27.4	120
\$500,000-\$999,000	42.2	12.0	351
\$1,000,000+	16.9	3.8	447

Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Education			
Some High School	0.1	3.0	3
High School Graduate	3.8	19.3	20
Some College	14.0	31.2	45
Undergraduate Degree	33.4	23.6	142
Some Post Graduate Work	6.5	3.52	185
Graduate Degree	41.9	19.1	219

Dive Travelers	Group %	National %	Index
Occupation			
Management/Business/Financial	29.1	18.0	162
Professional	13.0	9.1	143
Sales/Office Worker	7.0	10.1	69
Natural Resources/Construction/Maintenance	1.9	5.6	35
Other	6.7	13.3	50

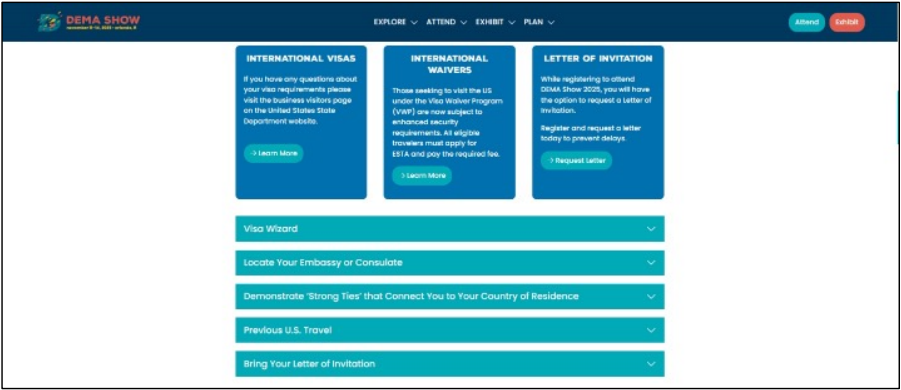
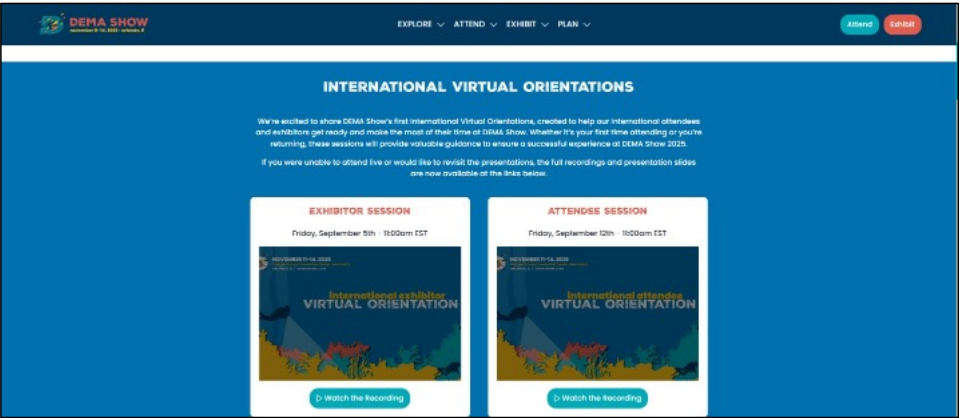
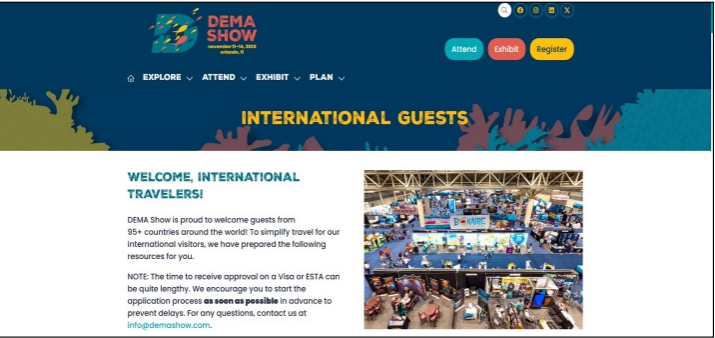
INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION AND
RESOURCE HUB FOR DEMA SHOW

With several changes to U.S. policy and processes for entry into the U.S. for business purposes, the International Membership Committee approved the concept of creating a section on the DEMA Show website to assist international attendees and exhibitors in navigating these concerns.

In September, to assist further, NTP Events, DEMA’s show management partner, produced several live webinars which were recorded and posted on www.demashow.com for the DEMA Show international audience to learn more about registering and participating in DEMA Show.

In addition, DEMA also posted helpful information on Visas, Waivers and a template for a letter of invitation. With a few additions, DEMA makes this information available to international DEMA Show travelers every year.

A part of the Committee objectives a survey has been released to the diving industry, with the goal of learning more about how DEMA Show exhibitors view dive shows produced outside the United States. At this writing the survey has not been completed but access will be available throughout DEMA Show, concluding in late November. This survey and work done by the committee will assist in making a strategic recommendation for international membership for presentation to the DEMA Board of Directors. ■





DIVING COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS AWARD

CELEBRATING DEMA MEMBERS THAT UPLIFT THEIR COMMUNITY THROUGH UNIQUE DIVING PROGRAMS

The Diving Equipment and Marketing Association is eager to recognize DEMA-member companies that utilize their recreational diving businesses and community positions to make a difference locally or on a broader scale. DEMA has created the Diving Community Champions Award for this purpose.

The Platinum, Gold, and Silver Diving Community Champion Awards are provided to the top three nominated DEMA-member companies as voted by the DEMA membership. The Awards are presented each year at DEMA Show and, when publicized to professionals and consumers, help generate public interest in recreational diving by demonstrating that diving can make a difference to communities everywhere. DEMA-member companies from all stakeholder groups have been engaging with

one another to help each other locally or even globally, through a variety of activities, and we are honored to recognize these efforts. Through social media and other channels, DEMA makes a point of informing the entire diving industry and the viewing public about these company-wide efforts.

DEMA congratulates the 2025 Diving Community Champion Award finalists:

- [California Scuba Center Inc](#)
- [Maputo Dive Center](#)
- [Rainbow Reef Dive Center](#)

This year’s Platinum, Gold, and Silver award winners will be announced during the DEMA Member Update and Annual Meeting, which will take place on Wednesday, November 12th, from 8:00 to 9:45 a.m. in Room W311A-D at DEMA Show 2025 in Orlando, FL. ■





WAVE MAKERS AWARD

RECOGNIZING NEW DIVE INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Wave Makers Award aims to recognize new professionals who have worked in the industry for five years or less and have made a significant contribution to the industry during that time.

Wave Makers are employees or owners of DEMA-Member businesses who have been involved as professionals in the Diving Industry for 60 months or less and who should be recognized for their contributions to the industry, a dive business, and DEMA. Nominations must be submitted by employees/owners of a current DEMA member company (self-nominations are not accepted). Member professionals who have been active with DEMA by attending DEMA Show, serving on a committee or task force, or doing other activities related to DEMA can qualify. The Wave Makers Award recognizes the top individual as voted by the DEMA membership.

DEMA congratulates the 2025 Wave Makers Award finalists:

- Ben Collins, Garmin
- Viviana Marcy, International Training
- Suzanne Tucci, Jr. Scientists in the Sea

The 2025 Wave Makers Award recipient will be announced during the DEMA Member Update and Annual Meeting, which will take place on Wednesday, November 12th, from 8:00 to 9:45 a.m. in Room W311A-D at DEMA Show 2025 in Orlando, FL. ■





THE DIVING EQUIPMENT & MARKETING ASSOCIATION

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