

Manta site management - Community practice in action

Wendy Laros

Manta Pacific Research Foundation, USA

On the Kona coast of Hawaii, dive operators started taking people scuba diving with manta rays at night in the 1980's. As manta sightings increased, more operators offered the tour. In 1993, the community of dive operators drafted a set of guidelines for participants. Manta tour operators incorporated both the 1993 guidelines and basic manta information from the Manta Pacific Research Foundation into their briefings for participants. The popularity of this tour continues and numbers have increased. On November 27, 2012, the United States Coast Guard and representatives from State agencies conducted a meeting with Kona manta tour operators that included both scuba diving and snorkeling companies. Operators were advised to create a working group to draft a set of standards. After three months and ten face-to-face meetings, the group completed the project. The purpose of the Manta Tour Operator Standards is to increase the safety of manta rays and their habitat as well as the safety of the users and participants of the manta tour experience. The goal is to establish community practices and to educate those people involved. Understanding how a local group of operators worked through this process may help people in areas transitioning from a manta fishery to manta tourism.

Biography

Wendy Laros, Co-Founder of Manta Pacific Research Foundation, has been a member of the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) since 1991 and has logged over 3,000 scuba dives, most of them with manta rays. Co-author of the PADI Manta Ray Diver course, she has been teaching divers about manta rays since 1996. Director of Training and Education at Jack's Diving Locker, Wendy has developed a marine education curriculum taught to thousands of divers and snorkelers annually.

wendy@mantapacific.org