

SCUBA Diving Training at Marion Military Institute

SCUBA Tigers FAQ Document AY 2013-2014

The following information is provided to acquaint MMI cadets with opportunities in SCUBA training at the Institute. This is the second year for SCUBA lessons and open water certification at MMI. Last September the first group of MMI SCUBA Tigers started their training with Instructional Staff of Southern Skin Divers Supply (SSDS), MMI's partner in SCUBA training



and recreational diving. After four weeks of training at MMI facilities 21 Cadets earned their Scuba Schools International (SSI) Open-Water Certification during their check dives at Morrison Springs and St. Andrews Jetties, FL. After that, the newly certified divers went drift diving and swam with the Manatees (picture to the Left) in the Rainbow River and Crystal River, FL. Many took advantage of inshore wreck trips out of Panama City and then

learned about the benefits of Enriched Air NITROX and harvested some Flounder in the Winter. Their progression led to diving several wrecks off the coast of Alabama and began the work of helping to eradicate the invasive lionfish population. The MMI Scuba Tigers made their final dives this Spring off the shores of Orange Beach, AL on a sunken Navy Tug followed by the aircraft carrier, USS Oriskany (the "Mighty O") which is the largest man-made reef in the world.

Do I need to be a strong swimmer to take scuba lessons?

Not necessarily, but you do need to be comfortable in the water and have moderate – good swim skills. Safety always comes first in SCUBA and safe SCUBA is all about the equipment. Having the right equipment and knowing how to use it is the key to being successful at SCUBA.

Tell me more about Scuba Schools International and Southern Skin Divers Supply.

SCUBA Schools International (SSI, www.divessi.com) is a bona fide dive center that ensures the quality of its training worldwide and their courses and training hold to the highest standards in the industry. Additionally, SSI is member of the Recreational SCUBA Council (RSC) which is among the main recreational agencies for SCUBA Certification. *Southern Skin Divers Supply* (SSDS,



<http://www.ssdsupply.com/>) was founded in 1953 and is the oldest SCUBA School in the United States. SSDS has partnered with Marion Military Institute as the professional provider for education and training in open water SCUBA diving.



What is SSDS's safety record?

SSDS has trained more divers than any dive school in Alabama. SSI's scuba instructors are also the family owners of the business and have over 50 years combined experience as Master Dive instructors. No diver has ever suffered a dive injury on any SSDS trips or training exercises in over 60 years.

What does scuba training involve?

Training begins with classroom and pool instruction followed by your open water check dives. Classroom, pool training and exercises are done at MMI under the guidance and supervision of SSDS instructors. After all class and pool training and testing is completed, 4 to 5 check dives are made with the training staff of SSDS. When all are successfully completed you become a certified open water diver.

What scuba equipment do I need for my Open Water Diver certification class?

Initially, the snorkeling equipment (snorkel, mask and fins) needs to be fitted, selected and then purchased. This will be used for all water training. While training, different models of life support or SCUBA equipment will be used so that the student can assess personal preferences in equipment features.

What is the minimum scuba equipment would I want to purchase to be active in scuba diving?

Like many water sports SCUBA is equipment intensive on the front end. Once the equipment is purchased most of your immediate equipment expenses are behind you and you have only annual maintenance of the equipment to ensure proper function. Almost every diver that becomes active in SCUBA ends up owning all of their equipment except for possibly tanks. This equipment includes a dive computer, buoyancy compensator (BC), air regulator, octopus (secondary/back-up air breather), and weights. You will probably also wish to purchase an exposure suit (wetsuit) which may be purchased separately or through SSDS.





About how much does the equipment cost?

The snorkeling gear (mask, fins and snorkel) will cost \$400-\$600. The rest that will be selected by the diver after s/he has practiced with different models should cost about \$1500-\$1800. So, if you purchase all of your equipment through SSDS the anticipated range for total expenses is in the range of \$2,250 - \$2,750, or more if you desire some of the higher performance equipment.

There are significant financial and service incentives to purchase your equipment through SSDS who are an authorized Aqua Lung dealer.

Aqua Lung's equipment guarantees are only valid

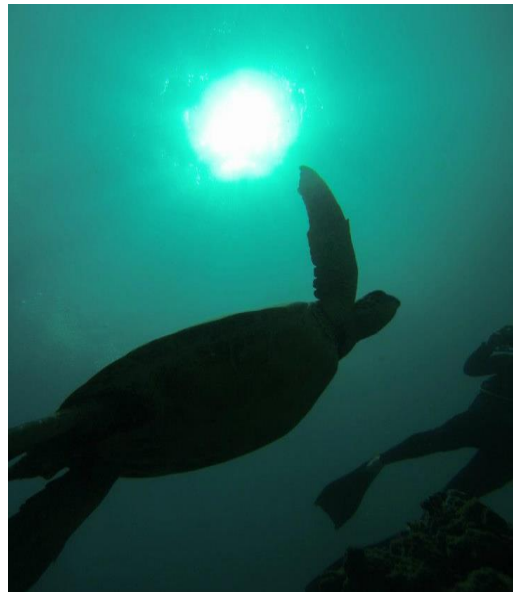
when the equipment is purchased through an authorized Aqua Lung dealer. Aqua Lung is an international provider of premiere SCUBA equipment. The company was originally formed by Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Émile Gagnan who held the patent on the first scuba regulator in 1943. Aqua Lung scuba equipment is among the best available in quality and design and provides the diver with numerous safety, comfort and quality advantages. Don't settle for substandard life-saving equipment and never purchase used equipment or old equipment that has not been in service for an extended period. As your safety is paramount we strongly recommend that you do not purchase your equipment on the internet.

So, what's the cost of classes, pool instruction and check dives?

The lessons are \$350 for open-water certification. If *renting* (as opposed to purchasing) SSDS equipment during the check dives is preferred or if you purchase your equipment from another vendor other than SSDS the training costs will be \$690.

How much will it cost for my certification dives?

If all equipment is purchased from SSDS the only fees will be hotel accommodations and food for the two day trip. If the Life Support (SCUBA) Equipment is not purchased through SSDS, the Certification dives will cost \$340 for entrance fees, Life Support Rental, Instructor supervision and processing fees.





What are the payment terms? All at once?

Can I pay as I go?

A deposit of \$250 is required to secure a place on the class roster. That \$250 payment will be applied in full toward your lessons when scuba classes begin. SSDS accepts, checks, cash, Visa and Mastercard. The remainder of training fees (\$100) as well as snorkeling equipment are paid to SSDS at the start of the course. SCUBA students will have the opportunity to try various gear configurations (buoyancy compensators, wetsuits, etc.) in the

pool/water-based instruction. The SCUBA Equipment is purchased once it is selected, as lessons progress or just prior to certification dives.

How do I sign up?

If you are interested in signing up provide a check in the amount of \$250 ***made payable to Southern Skin Divers Supply***. Send that check to the attention of Dr. Sam Stevenson, Marion Military Institute, 1101 Washington Street, Marion, AL 36756, or give it to Dr. Stevenson when you arrive on campus. Either way, once your check is received you are enrolled in the class. Seats are open on a ***first-come-first-serve basis*** and class size will be limited to 30 students and it fills up early, so if you are interested in the total SCUBA experience send in your deposit at your earliest opportunity this summer before you arrive on campus for Fall semester.

When does SCUBA training begin and how long does the training take?

Training will begin only after the semester has started and students have had a chance to get acclimated to the rigorous academic and military training, probably beginning in late September to early October, depending on the logistics of getting participants signed up and pool schedules finalized. SCUBA training will consist of approximately 22 hours of class and pool training in addition to the certification dives.





Am I certified after taking the classroom and pool portions of my scuba course?

No. Once training is completed and the written exam is passed, the certification dive trip (5 check dives over one weekend) must be completed to earn the SSI Open Water Certification.

Should I be afraid of jellyfish, sting rays, sharks or other sea life?

You should not be afraid but you should respect everything in the water.

Jellyfish, barnacles, corals, stingrays etc., can injure you if you come in contact with them. Observing without harassing in this environment is safest practice for everything and everyone in the water.

What are some of the possible scuba dives that I might get to participate in after training?

SSDS offers group travel almost every weekend year round. Underwater Photography as well as the Gulf Coast Wreck diving is very popular among our divers. For those of you that like to fish and hunt, spearfishing is very rewarding. The history lovers might like to participate in our artifact and fossil dives. SSDS also take many tropical dive trips to the Caribbean and Pacific.

I am a certified diver but I haven't been diving in over a year, what should I do?

You can't go wrong taking a refresher course. Not only will things come back to you quicker, but you will get to see the latest in sport diving equipment. SCUBA *technology* has progressed at an amazing pace over the past decade due to advances in micro processing/computing technology and material science. Divers now use a dive computer which gives the diver more bottom time as the computer gives the diver accurate real-time readings for bottom time, current depth, greatest depth encountered during that dive and time remaining for completing an no-decompression dive.



(SCUBA Tigers diving the Navy Tug)

I am a certified diver but would like additional advanced training, do you offer that?

Absolutely. SSDS offers Continuing Education training usually 2 to 3 times each month. See, <http://www.ssdsupply.com/>. For updated course scheduling



(above: Morrison Springs check dive for the inaugural MMI SCUBA Tigers newly certified divers)

Tell me about the fun and adventure that SCUBA diving holds.

The instructors of SSDS all have over 5,000 instructor dives each and continue to train hundreds of divers each year. SCUBA is something you can learn and continue for your lifetime hobby. The underwater world is constantly changing and you can dive the same site virtually hundreds of times and still see something new each time. As MMI will likely have sufficient numbers of cadets in the training and certification course (30+), we will have sufficient numbers of participants to be able to charter group trips that are specific to the group's interests.

Will this add significant workload to an already busy schedule? I am concerned with being overloaded while my primary focus will be on core curriculum classes.

Anticipate 3-5 hours of class time plus approximately 3 weekends for pool training (all at MMI facilities). Many MMI cadets are also student athletes, all of whom spend far more time than 3-5 hours/week engaged in their respective sport. If anything, SCUBA training will actually help keep the students focused on their academics because the training is withheld if/when a student's grades fall below a B average (for SAPs) or C average (for all others) and reengaged when grades come back up. Once the cadets have arrived and gotten into a routine many of them tend to find plenty of time to take off during weekends to Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, etc., and SCUBA training will tend to keep them in town, focused on their grades and focused on something that they really want to, learn to SCUBA dive.



(MMI SCUBA Tigers Flounder trip)



Who do I contact for more information?

Dr. Sam Stevenson (an SSI Master Diver) is the faculty advisor for the ***MMI Scuba Tigers Club***

You automatically become a member of when you complete training and are certified. He can be reached at 334-683-2370 (office) or by email, samstevenson@marionmilitary.edu, or at his office in the Chemistry building (office hours 1300-1600, M-Th).

We hope to see you in the water!!!!

* Most photos by Mark Tant of SSDS, go to www.marktant.com