

# Reef Environmental Education Foundation



## Liability Release and Assumption of Risk

Please read carefully, fill in all blanks, and initial each paragraph before signing.

**REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, HEREBY DECLARE THAT I AM A CERTIFIED SCUBA DIVER, TRAINED IN SAFE DIVING PRACTICES, AND AM AWARE OF THE INHERENT HAZARDS OF SKIN AND SCUBA DIVING.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand and agree that, in consideration of my being permitted to participate in this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity, neither the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, Inc. (REEF), nor any of their employees, officers, agents, or assigns [hereinafter referred to as the Released Parties] may be held liable or responsible in any way for injury, illness, death, or other damages that may occur as a result of my participation in the REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity, including but not limited to scuba diving, dive boat use, equipment use, snorkeling, other water sports activity, or any other activity relating to this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity [hereinafter referred to as Diving Activities]; or as a result of the negligence of any party, including the Released Parties, whether passive or active.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the sole function of REEF and their employees, officers, and agents during the course of this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity is to provide instruction in and familiarization with marine life identification and use of marine life survey forms. Although REEF employees, officers, or agents may or may not be certified scuba instructors / divemasters, and will give freely of their marine life knowledge and experience, I understand that they are not acting in the capacity as scuba instructor / divemaster. I understand that REEF employees, officers, or agents do not lead and are not in any way responsibly or liable for any Diving Activities conducted during the course of this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that REEF is independent of and has no business association, as partner, joint venturer, owner, or otherwise, with any resort, hotel, carrier, dive center, boat operator, or other person or firm furnishing any travel-related or Diving Activity-related service, equipment, or facility in connection with this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity. I further understand that REEF assumes no liability or responsibility for any service, equipment, or facility furnished by any such resort, hotel, carrier, dive center, boat operator, or other person or firm either as to its availability, safety, quality, or condition nor for the acts or omissions of any employee or agent thereof.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that diving with compressed air involves certain inherent risks: decompression sickness, embolism, or other hyperbaric injuries can occur that require treatment in a recompression chamber. I further understand that the Diving Activities may be conducted at a site that is remote, by time or distance or both, from such a recompression chamber. I still choose to proceed with such Diving Activities in spite of the possible absence of a recompression chamber in proximity to the dive site.

-- OVER --

\_\_\_\_\_I declare that I am in good mental and physical fitness for Diving Activities and that I am not under the influence of alcohol or any other drug that is contraindicatory to Diving Activities. If I am taking medication / drugs, I declare that I have seen a physician and have approval to engage in Diving Activities while under the influence of the medication / drugs.

\_\_\_\_\_I understand that Diving Activities are physically strenuous and that I will be exerting myself during this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity, and that if I am injured as a result of heart attack, panic, hyperventilation, etc., that I assume the risk of said injuries and that I will not hold the Released Parties responsible for same.

\_\_\_\_\_I will inspect all of my equipment prior to all Diving Activities. I will not hold the Released Parties responsible for my failure to inspect my equipment prior to engaging in any Diving Activities.

\_\_\_\_\_In consideration of being allowed to participate in this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity, I hereby personally assume all risks in connection with said REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity, including, but not limited to, all Diving Activities, for any harm, injury, illness, or damage that may befall me while I am a participant, including all risks connected therewith, whether foreseen or unforeseen.

\_\_\_\_\_I further save and hold harmless the Released Parties from any claim or lawsuit by me, my family, estate, heirs, or assigns that may arise out of my participation in this REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity, including both claims that may arise during the REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity or after I complete the REEF Field Survey / REEF Activity.

\_\_\_\_\_I further declare that I am of lawful age and both competent and qualified in law and equity to sign this Liability Release and Assumption of Risk, or that I have acquired the written consent of my parent or guardian.

\_\_\_\_\_I understand that the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital, and that I have signed this document of my own free act.

IN CONSIDERATION OF BEING PERMITTED TO PARTICIPAT IN THIS REEF FIELD SURVEY / REEF ACTIVITY, IT IS THE INTENTION OF \_\_\_\_\_ BY THIS INSTRUMENT TO EXEMPT AND RELEASE THE REEF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC., THEIR EMPLOYEES, OFFICERS, AGENTS, AND ASSIGNS FROM ALL LIABILITY OR RESPONSIBLITY WHATSOEVER FOR PERSONAL INJURY, ILLNESS, PROPERTY DAMAGE, OR WRONGFUL DEATH, HOWEVER CAUSED, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASED PARTIES, WHETHER PASSIVE OR ACTIVE.

I HAVE FULLY INFORMED MYSELF OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS LIABILITY RELEASE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK BY READING IT BEFORE I SIGNED IT ON BEHALF OF MYSELF AND MY HEIRS. I INTEND AND AGREE TO BE BOUND BY THIS DOCUMENT.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian (where applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Lionfish Biology and Venemology  
Understanding of Risk

Overview

Lionfish (*Pterois volitans/miles*) are members of the scorpionfish family native to the Indo-Pacific. They are now also found in the waters throughout the Western Atlantic from Rhode Island through the Bahamas Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. Lionfish are predators reaching a size of more than 470 mm and reproducing year-round in the southern portion of their Atlantic range. They also possess venomous spines and potentially represent both ecological and human health risks. Significant study, public education/outreach and control efforts are now being planned and implemented throughout the region.

Need for specimens

In order to predict the spread and impact of this invasive species, data are needed to determine populations and distribution, age and growth, reproduction, predation, larval disbursement, recruitment, mortality, genetics and changes to native fish communities. Obtaining this information requires the collection of many samples and appropriate preservation of these samples. There is little funding and few field operations available to collect the number of samples required for statistically robust analysis. REEF is working with U.S. state, federal, and university researchers in addition to Caribbean nations to obtain the necessary samples as well as educate the public and key government officials about the lionfish issue. As part of this effort, we are also collaborating with the dive community to gather samples and data from their regularly dived sites.

Venemology

Lionfish spines, like those of many other scorpionfishes, contain venom. Spines located within the dorsal, ventral, and anal fins contain venomous tissue along the length of the spine. A sheath or skin covers the spine and glandular tissue which, when exposed in the act of puncture, releases venom into the wound. Severities and reactions to stings can vary however lionfish stings are not known to be lethal. Reactions to venom typically include localized, moderate to severe, pain and swelling, which normally subsides within hours and with first-aid treatment. Complications or increased severity of reactions could result from allergic reactions or severe punctures. Heat and time reduce the effect of this venom. As with any wound, cleaning and sterilization of the affected area is important to prevent infection.

Participation

While the likelihood of coming in contact with a lionfish in the water or on the vessel is extremely small for those wanting to avoid contact, there never-the-less exists the possibility of being stung. No participants wishing to avoid collection, dissection or any other physical contact with lionfish will be asked to handle or in any other way physically engage themselves with any lionfish. All contact with lionfish, direct or otherwise, is voluntary in nature as is participation in this project, knowing the venomous nature of the subject.

I understand these risks and am willing to take part in this project anyway.

Printed Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and date of legal guardian required if participant is under 18.

Legal Guardian Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_