

## Captain Mike Birns to assume oversight of BGD Scientific Diving Operations and Liaison for the University of Delaware

As the new Program Director of Scientific Dive Operations at Black Girls Dive Foundation, Capt. Mike will be responsible for courses, scientific diver certifications, reviewing and managing scientific dive plans. As an educator, Mike has extensive experience in Curriculum Development for environmental interpretations, boating, and SCUBA diving; teaching established curriculum to audiences of all ages, cultural backgrounds, interests and educational levels, and creating materials such as videos, signs, exhibits, tear sheets, etc.



Mike's academic pathway includes being a graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara where he obtained a Bachelor Degree in Physical Geography and Aquatic Biology and being a Registered EMT in Florida. He currently the Dive Safety Office and SCUBA instructor for the University of Delaware. Previously he spent four (4) years as the Marine Operations Manager and OCEARCH Coordinator. He is also the co-founder and President of the Manatee Eco-Tourism Association of Citrus County (META) and is well known for his conservation initiatives in Citrus County, Florida that includes supporting U.S. Fish & Wildlife to develop the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge, and his Field Research that has supported vessel and shore-based research in the marine and freshwater environments.

**About:** Black Girls Dive Foundation is a non-profit organization that provides aquatic based eco-STEM programming for young girls of color that have been historically excluded from aquatic-based science spaces and subsequently are underrepresented in those spaces. BGDF has chapters in New Jersey, Atlanta (Georgia Aquarium) and Maryland (Liberty Road Parks & Recreation in Baltimore County and St. Francis School in Baltimore City). Our mission, Keeping Young Girls Afloat, addresses three critical issues: (1) the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap that undermines our ideals of freedom, equality and opportunity; (2) the limited or restricted sense of youth agency and voice; and (3) the cultivation of the next generation of scientists, conservationists and planetary stewards. Our efforts of positive social-impact through educational programming yields transformational experiences by implementation of unique opportunities.