

Lad Akins

Director of Operations, Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF)

Lad is the Founding Executive Director of REEF and led the organization in that capacity for 16 years, helping to design and develop the organization's widely recognized marine conservation programs. In 2005, he changed his position in the organization to focus solely on the lionfish invasion. A professional diver and Coast Guard Captain, Lad has successfully bridged the gap between science, academia, management, commercial interests and the public. His broad perspective includes serving on numerous state, federal and international boards, panels and working groups, discovering and describing new species of fish, conducting research as an aquanaut in the Aquarius habitat and piloting deepwater submersibles. Lad has helped develop REEF's marine life education and data collection programs and continues to lead numerous volunteer and research based projects each year. His focus as REEF's Director of Operations is on addressing the lionfish invasion including developing and implementing research, outreach, training and control programs throughout the region. Lad has helped develop many of the lionfish programs and practices in place throughout the region and has co-authored and produced 'The Lionfish Cookbook' as a way to help educate stakeholders and encourage removals of invasive lionfish. This book represents a novel approach to addressing the invasion and is the result of the strong partnerships Lad has helped to align.