



**OCEAN FIRST**  

---

**INSTITUTE**

## **Director of Science**

**Key Largo, Florida | Full-Time | On-Site | Salaried**

**Reports to:** CEO & Chief Scientist

**Salary Range:** \$75,000–\$80,000 annually, commensurate with experience

### **About Ocean First Institute**

Ocean First Institute (OFI) is a nonprofit organization advancing shark conservation through applied research, immersive education, and strategic partnerships. Our work integrates rigorous field science with public engagement to protect marine ecosystems and train the next generation of conservation leaders.

Our research focuses on shark movement ecology, tagging technologies, field-based conservation science, and student mentorship across Florida and international sites.

### **Position Overview**

The Director of Science is a senior scientific leadership role responsible for implementing and advancing Ocean First Institute’s shark research programs under the strategic direction of the CEO & Chief Scientist.

This is a hands-on, field-intensive leadership position. The Director of Science will lead shark tagging initiatives, oversee laboratory operations, manage research staff and interns, and execute high-performance field programs across South Florida.

This role requires a seasoned shark biologist with demonstrated experience deploying satellite and acoustic tags, leading vessel-based research operations, and operating confidently in dynamic marine environments. Candidates must demonstrate independent experience conducting shark capture, handling, tagging, and data management in real-world field conditions.

# Primary Work Location & Travel Requirements

- Primary work location: Ocean First Institute Shark Lab, Key Largo, Florida
- Regular travel required to Florida Atlantic University (FAU) laboratory facilities in Boca Raton
- Travel between Key Largo and Boca Raton is required and reimbursed according to organizational policy
- Occasional domestic and international travel for field research, conferences, and conservation partnerships
- Must be based in or willing to relocate to South Florida
- This is primarily an on-site position with limited remote flexibility

Reliable transportation and the ability to commute between Key Largo and Boca Raton are required.

## Core Responsibilities

### 1. Shark Research & Field Leadership

- Lead shark tagging initiatives, including satellite, acoustic, and archival tag deployment
- Design and execute capture protocols, field logistics, and research plans
- Independently deploy satellite tags and manage associated data systems
- Oversee data integrity, database management, and reporting
- Ensure compliance with permits, IACUC protocols, and regulatory requirements
- Maintain vessels, tagging equipment, and field safety standards
- Publish and present research findings in scientific and public forums
- Develop and strengthen university and agency research partnerships

### 2. Laboratory & Program Management

- Oversee operations at the OFI Shark Lab (Key Largo)
- Coordinate research activities at FAU laboratory facilities (Boca Raton)
- Supervise research associates, interns, fellows, and volunteers
- Maintain organized workflows, equipment logs, and data systems
- Develop project timelines and research budgets
- Support integration between research, education, and nonprofit operations

### 3. Summer Field Course Leadership

The Director of Science will lead OFI's intensive summer shark research course in the Florida Keys. This includes:

- Back-to-back field days in marine environments
- Vessel-based shark capture and tagging operations
- Daily instruction and supervision of students

- Long operational days with minimal downtime during program weeks
- Full responsibility for scientific integrity and safety during field sessions

#### **4. Fundraising & Representation**

- Contribute scientific expertise to grant proposals and reports
- Participate in donor briefings and stewardship events
- Represent OFI at scientific conferences and conservation forums
- Translate complex research into compelling public-facing communication

## **Required Qualifications**

### **Education & Experience**

- PhD in Marine Biology, Marine Science, Oceanography, or a related field
- Demonstrated independent experience tagging sharks with satellite transmitters
- Direct experience leading shark capture and vessel-based field operations
- Proven track record managing field crews or research teams
- Experience operating within laboratory research environments
- Experience mentoring students or supervising early-career scientists

### **Technical Skills**

- Proficiency with shark tagging technologies (satellite and acoustic required)
- Experience managing movement ecology datasets
- Statistical analysis skills (R required; Python a plus)
- GIS or spatial analysis proficiency
- Knowledge of marine permitting and compliance processes

### **Field & Physical Requirements**

- Comfortable working aboard small vessels in variable sea conditions
- Ability to lift and transport equipment up to 50 lbs
- Scientific diving certification preferred
- Captain's license preferred but not required
- Willingness to work extended field days during active programs

### **Professional Traits**

We are seeking a high-performance, mission-driven leader who demonstrates:

- Decisive field leadership
- Operational discipline and organization
- Clear, direct communication
- Scientific rigor paired with adaptability

- Comfort in high-intensity marine research environments
- Accountability and follow-through

This is a dynamic nonprofit environment requiring both independence and collaboration.

## Why This Role Matters

The Director of Science will directly influence shark conservation outcomes across Florida and beyond. This role offers the opportunity to lead applied shark research, mentor emerging scientists, and expand a growing conservation organization's scientific impact.

## Application Instructions

Please submit:

- Resume or CV
- Cover letter detailing relevant shark tagging and field leadership experience
- Two professional references

Send materials to: **info@oceanfirstinstitute.org**

Subject line: **Director of Science Application**

Due to the anticipated volume of applications, we are unable to respond to every submission. Candidates selected to move forward in the interview process will be contacted directly.