



For the Ecosystem

Seagrass provides **essential food, habitat and nursery areas** to fish and invertebrates. While some fish can be found in seagrasses throughout the year, others rely on seagrass beds only during certain, yet critical, life stages **using it for cover from predators.**



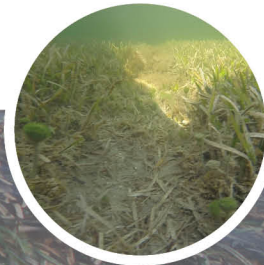
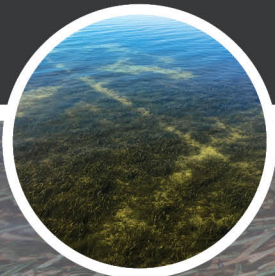
For the Water

Seagrasses help **trap fine sediments and particles** that are suspended in water which **increases water clarity.** Without it, these sediments are often stirred by wind and waves, decreasing water clarity, affecting marine animal behavior and contributing to a general decrease in the recreational quality of coastal areas. Seagrasses also work to **filter nutrients** that come from land-based runoff.



For the Economy

The economic value of seagrass can be measured through other industries like **commercial and recreational fishing and nature/wildlife tourism**– all of which rely on this habitat to survive. At least 70% of Florida's fish species spend at least part of their life cycle within seagrass communities.



Be Seagrass Safe



Scan to take the pledge online:



UF/IFAS Extension
Florida Sea Grant

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(352) 392-2801



SCARS

Boating. Fishing. You.

HURT



SCARS HURT

What is Seagrass Scarring?

Seagrass scarring is caused by boats entering shallow waters, where the propeller comes into contact with seagrasses. This creates damage as the propeller slashes into the bottom, where crucial root systems are. Recovery and growth of seagrasses in these scarred areas takes years, and if the damage is repeated, the seagrass bed may never completely recover.

Scarring also leaves seagrass beds vulnerable to storms and other forms of erosion. In south Florida, over 30,000 acres of seagrass have been scarred by boat propellers.

Seagrass scarring hurts:

Boating – Running aground can cause damage to your boat and require expensive towing assistance.

Fishing – Seagrass beds are essential nursery and feeding grounds for many sport fish species.

You – Boating enjoyment for you and future generations relies on your actions today.



AVOID

Whenever possible, avoid seagrass beds and utilize navigation channels or deeper water while under power. Simply remaining aware of your surroundings and being mindful of where you are can go a long way.



TRIM

If over seagrass beds in shallow water, be sure to trim your motor up and idle to a safe depth before getting on plane. In fact, trimming up the engine will not only prevent seagrass damage, it will also prevent costly engine repairs.



PUSH

If aground, do not proceed under power. Turn off and trim up your motor, and push the boat to safe depth. There will be times when avoidance is impossible and trimming is not an option. In these cases pushing your boat helps you avoid damaging both seagrass AND your prop/engine. A short push is a small price to pay for what you'll save.



LEARN

The current extent of the damage is considerable throughout Florida, especially in high traffic areas near channels, marinas, and urbanized areas. By simply learning good, common sense boating habits, you can easily slow the damage and, in time, reverse it.

Visit our website to find out more on how you can help.



Seagrass Safe Boating Pledge

Research has shown that when people take a pledge to do a certain behavior, they are more likely to follow through. We would like to ask you to take the following pledge to protect seagrass meadows.

"I PLEDGE"

As a boater, I want to help protect seagrass in Florida and pledge to:

- Avoid seagrass beds when possible,
- Trim my motor and idle to a seagrass safe depth before getting up on plane,
- Push my boat to a seagrass safe area before engaging my motor if I run aground.

Scan to take the pledge online:



BOATERS, BE AWARE



With more than 900,000 registered vessels, Florida ranks among the nation's top three boating states. However, boaters may pose a risk to the fragile seagrass meadows that lie along Florida's coast.

Once seagrass is lost to poor boating practices such as prop scarring and grounding, Florida loses a resource vital to its economy. They also provide food for sea turtles and thousands of other marine life, increase water clarity and improve general water quality. All these elements build a healthy coastal environment, which in turn attracts residents and tourists, boosting the state's economy.



"Seagrass propeller scarring is 100% preventable."

While it can take up to a decade for seagrass to be reestablished after scarring. The precaution to avoid damaging them would take a boater just a few minutes.