

A large sailboat is shown from a low angle on the deck, looking towards the mast. Several people are on board: a man in a white shirt on the left, a man in a striped shirt and shorts in the center, and a man in a blue shirt on the right. The boat is white with red ropes. The background is a clear blue sky and a calm blue sea.

WATER ACCESS

Protecting and Enjoying Florida's Greatest Asset

Florida Sea Grant is providing the information needed to help Florida's citizens and visitors access the coast and waterways responsibly.

It's no secret why Florida is so attractive. Its 825 miles of sandy beaches, year-round boating and hard-working — and welcoming — waterfront communities make our peninsula quite a treasure. As with anything of great value, there is a delicate balance between all that it offers and preserving its value.

As demand for access to Florida's coast grows, coastal communities are feeling the squeeze. Mom-and-pop marinas compete with bigger and better-financed operators for the state's most valuable real estate. Public beaches may also be private backyards. Crowded ramps disperse boaters to even more crowded waterways. The problem of access will only grow with rising seas, eroding shorelines and the nation's continuing love affair with Florida's beaches and its waters.

The University of Florida Levin College of Law and Florida Sea Grant have developed "Accessing the Florida Coast" (FloridaWaterAccess.org), a website that serves as a self-help resource for the people of Florida.

FloridaWaterAccess.org provides information about rights and responsibilities related to the three main types of water access in Florida.

BEACH ACCESS

Beachfront property owners, beach-goers and local elected officials can learn:

- Where private property ends and public access rights begin
- How local governments can improve public access through land-use regulations
- The effect of beach nourishment programs on public access

BOATING ACCESS

Waterway managers, boaters, marina owners, boat manufacturers and policymakers can learn:

- Which local, state and federal laws govern anchoring, mooring and navigation
- How to download and use the free, searchable Florida Boating Law database
- Which municipalities are participating in the state's Anchoring and Mooring Pilot Program

WORKING WATERFRONTS

Port managers, commercial fishermen, elected officials, marine industries and city planners can learn:

- What specific policy tools can be implemented to preserve features of traditional working waterfronts
- How the water-dependency test can be used to protect recreational and commercial waterfronts
- Tips for using model management plans and tax ordinances to develop and enhance sustainable working waterfront initiatives

It pulls together the legal and regulatory framework that will help coastal communities more effectively address water access, understand their rights, reduce environmental impacts and even save tax dollars.

Tom Ankersen, Florida Sea Grant's legal specialist and director of the law school's Conservation Clinic, believes solutions can be found through strong and meaningful stakeholder involvement. "People love to be on and in the water, and most want to do so responsibly. If they understand the legal and policy basis for regulation and management — when it makes sense and when it doesn't — they are more likely to become partners in efforts to protect both the resource and their access to it," says Ankersen.

The website addresses access to beaches, boating and working waterfronts through informative "toolkits" that contain materials for basic legal concepts, model laws and local ordinances, and case studies and best management practices from municipalities across the state. The site is a collaboration between the boating and waterway planning experts at Florida Sea Grant and faculty and students within the law school's Conservation Clinic.

Learn about the role you play in protecting Florida's coastal access by visiting:

FloridaWaterAccess.org

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ABOUT FLORIDA SEA GRANT

Florida Sea Grant is a university-based program that taps into the research expertise of more than 800 coastal and ocean scientists at the state's 16 major universities and research laboratories. The program's goal is to support research, education and extension to enhance economic opportunities for Floridians while protecting coastal resources. Florida Sea Grant is a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Board of Education and Florida's citizens and governments.

The program is also an integral part of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida, one of the nation's leading land-grant universities. Extension and education programs are conducted in partnership with UF/IFAS Extension and coastal counties of Florida.

Sea Grant agents live and work in coastal communities. They have a breadth of experiences and tremendous trust from their local residents as reliable sources of science-based information. Seven statewide extension specialists also lead highly relevant programs in seafood safety, boating and waterway planning, land-use law, aquaculture and fisheries management.



FlSeaGrant.org