



## Seagrass Outreach Partnership

The partners of the Florida Keys Seagrass Outreach Partnership (SOP) were first organized in 1998 in response to an alarming increase in boater impacts to seagrass habitat in shallow water. As concerned managers and educators, the Florida Keys SOP determined that we alone cannot realistically reach everyone in the State of Florida with the information that seagrass is ecologically and economically important and steps need to be taken to protect it. In 2001 we asked partners across the state to join us in taking this awareness to a statewide level. We are continuing the Seagrass Awareness effort in 2006 and will be asking our statewide partners to join us again this year.

A Seagrass Awareness Month was initiated in 1999 as a tool to "spread the word." Across the state every March, environmental groups and agencies sponsor press releases and articles, PSAs, displays and a host of other seagrass awareness activities as part of Seagrass Awareness Month.

Seagrasses are "alive" and their health is essential for the health of our ecosystem. Boater impacts to seagrass are a statewide problem and everyone will benefit from this statewide awareness campaign.

### **Seagrass Outreach Partnership Messages:**

Seagrass is ecologically important - "seagrass is alive"

Seagrass is economically important

Damaging seagrass habitat can have personal economic consequences

Methods of minimizing impacts - boating skills

Actions of individuals do make a difference to the seagrass habitat

## History of Seagrass Outreach Partnership

<b>1998</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• March 25, 1998: Seagrass Summit was held at Key Largo Library</li> <li>• Summit called by Everglades National Park, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Sea Grant Florida Bay Education Project</li> <li>• ~75 attendees from the community including scientists, fishers, agency representatives, citizens</li> <li>• Presentations on importance of seagrass both ecologically and economically, current education efforts, seagrass biology</li> <li>• Core Group was formed- "Seagrass Awareness Partnership"</li> <li>• Goals were set: reduce boating impacts to seagrass, more informed public about the importance of seagrass</li> <li>• Audiences were identified (analysis of vessel grounding data)</li> <li>• Messages were developed</li> <li>• Logo was designed - partners agree to use the Partnership logo instead of individual logos</li> </ul>
<b>1999</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May was declared Seagrass Awareness Month and a Kick-Off was held at the Monroe County Government Center, Marathon, FL               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ~50 attendees- elected officials, media, resource managers, public</li> <li>• Free overflights of damaged seagrass beds were offered to the media</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox (hardcopy) was developed and distributed</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (5), radio shows throughout Monroe County, <i>Waterways</i> TV show produced and aired a new episode on seagrass</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamation: Monroe County</li> </ul>
<b>2000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month is moved to March</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Kick-Off was held at the Islamorada Fishing Club, Islamorada, FL               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ~40 attendees- elected officials, media, resource managers, public</li> <li>• Florida Keys Guides Association offered free boat trips to the media to view seagrass damage (prop scars)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (5), radio shows throughout Monroe County, <i>Waterways</i> TV show produced and aired a new episode on seagrass, Radio PSAs by Monroe County Middle School Students were developed and aired</li> <li>• Seagrass slide show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• T-shirt was designed</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamation: Monroe County</li> <li>• Core group name was changed to "Seagrass Outreach Partnership"</li> </ul>
<b>2001</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Florida and Sea Grant Extension developed and distributed 3 "30" second Video PSAs</li> <li>• 3 slides were shown in movie theaters in South Dade and Key West prior to movies during Seagrass Awareness Month (paid advertisement)</li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (3), PSAs by Monroe County Middle School Students were aired, radio shows throughout Monroe County, <i>Waterways</i> TV</li> </ul>

<p><b>2001</b> <b>(continued)</b></p>	<p>show aired Seagrass shows entire month, Sanctuary newsletter <i>Sounding Line</i> features seagrass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness Campaign was taken to a Statewide level</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox was transferred to a CD and is sent to 100+ agencies and organizations throughout the State of Florida</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD made available on the Sanctuary web site</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Miami-Dade County</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events</li> <li>• Federation of Fly Fishers provide "Stay Off The Grass" bumper stickers</li> <li>• Seagrass slide show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> </ul>
<p><b>2002</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seagrass Festival - March 3, 2002 at World Wide Sportsman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 interactive booths</li> <li>• Jean-Michel Cousteau was guest of honor</li> <li>• 1500 people attend</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 3 slides were shown in movie theaters in Key West, Marathon, Tavernier prior to movies during Seagrass Awareness Month (provided free in Marathon and Tavernier)</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Village of Islamorada, City of Marathon, City of Key West (elsewhere around the State)</li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (1), radio shows throughout Monroe County, coverage by local newspapers about Festival, <i>Waterways</i> TV show aired Seagrass shows entire month</li> <li>• Participated in Miami-Dade Youth Fair with a Seagrass booth</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events</li> <li>• Seagrass poster was on display at the Key Largo library</li> <li>• PowerPoint Seagrass show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD was revised, updated, and available on Sanctuary web site</li> </ul>
<p><b>2003</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seagrass Festival- March 1, 2003 at World Wide Sportsman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 interactive booths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Offered free boat trips for the public to view damaged seagrass and restoration sites</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Village of Islamorada, City of Marathon</li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (1), radio shows throughout Monroe County, coverage in local newspapers about Festival, <i>Waterways</i> TV Show produced and broadcast a new seagrass show and aired archived shows during the entire month</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events</li> <li>• Seagrass slide show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• Various Seagrass articles in national publications (<i>Flyfisher</i>, <i>Boat U.S.</i>)</li> <li>• "<i>Natural South</i>" TV Show films and airs a show on Seagrass on Turner South Channel</li> </ul>

<p><b>2003 (continued)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD was revised and updated, mailed to 100+ and available on Sanctuary web site</li> <li>• Partner members were guest speakers at lecture series in Monroe County</li> <li>• "Canned" slide show was developed and distributed for use by partners for speaking opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>2004</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOP displayed a booth at 5 festivals in Monroe County during February and March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upper Keys Nautical Flea Market, Key West Nautical Flea Market and Boat Show, Marathon Seafood Festival, Rotary Kids Karnival, Coral Shores High School Marine Studies Class seagrass fundraiser</li> <li>• Visitors to the booth could play a "seagrass game" and win a "Seagrass" coolie cup</li> <li>• 4000+ visited the booths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Village of Islamorada, City of Key West, City of Key Colony Beach</li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (1), radio shows throughout Monroe County</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events, <i>Waterways</i> TV Show aired seagrass shows</li> <li>• PowerPoint Seagrass show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD was revised, updated, and available on Sanctuary web site</li> <li>• 4 posters were developed, printed in a variety of sizes (letter to poster) and displayed at locations throughout Monroe County (airports, government buildings, libraries, schools, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2005</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOP displayed a booth at 7 festivals in Florida during February and March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upper Keys Nautical Flea Market, Key West Nautical Flea Market and Boat Show, Marathon Seafood Festival, Rotary Kids Karnival, Coral Shores High School Marine Studies Class seagrass fundraiser, Dania Nautical Flea Market, Windley Key Day</li> <li>• 5000+ visited the booths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Village of Islamorada, City of Key West, City of Key Colony Beach</li> <li>• Media Campaign: Press Releases (1), radio shows throughout Monroe County</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events, <i>Waterways</i> TV Show aired seagrass shows</li> <li>• Seagrass slide show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD was revised, updated, and available on Sanctuary web site</li> <li>• "The Cost of a Bad Decision" poster was developed, printed, added to the CD, and utilized at events</li> </ul>
<p><b>2006</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received a Coastal Zone Management grant from Florida DEP to expand the SOP statewide</li> <li>• SOP displayed a booth at festivals throughout Florida during the busy tourist season of February and March and at Fishing Shows during the summer</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Save Our Seagrass/Save Your Boat” brochure was developed, printed, and distributed</li> <li>• Wrote, produced, recorded and aired 6 new radio PSAs</li> <li>• Purchased advertisement space for “Seagrass” messages in local Monroe County newspapers</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Village of Islamorada, City of Key West, City of Key Colony Beach</li> <li>• Media Campaign: radio shows throughout Monroe County</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events, <i>Waterways</i> TV Show aired seagrass shows</li> <li>• Seagrass slide show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD was revised, updated, and available on Sanctuary web sites</li> <li>• 1000 copies of the Seagrass Toolbox CD was produced and distributed</li> </ul>
<p><b>2007</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received a second Coastal Zone Management grant from Florida DEP to expand the SOP statewide</li> <li>• SOP displayed a booth at festivals throughout Florida during the busy tourist season of February and March and at Fishing Shows during the summer</li> <li>• Wrote, produced, recorded and aired 6 new radio PSAs</li> <li>• Developed and posted seagrass web site</li> <li>• Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamations: Monroe County, State of Florida/Governor, Village of Islamorada, City of Key West, City of Key Colony Beach</li> <li>• Media Campaign: radio shows throughout Monroe County</li> <li>• Statewide partners held a variety of events, <i>Waterways</i> TV Show aired seagrass shows</li> <li>• Seagrass slide show aired on Monroe County Channel 16</li> <li>• Seagrass Toolbox CD was revised, updated, and available on Sanctuary web site</li> </ul>