

Seagrass Boating Skills



You have probably noticed, either from the air or from the bridges, all the zig-zag patterns on seagrass flats. These are prop dredge scars caused by inadvertent or careless boating practices. Damage to seagrass flats from boats is an increasing problem in the State of Florida. Please pay attention to the following tips for boating in near shore habitats.

- ❖ Familiarize yourself with the local waters where you plan to boat.
- ❖ Always use up-to-date nautical charts of the area.
- ❖ Use marked channels where they exist and stay in deep water.
- ❖ Remember this jingle...
"Brown, Brown Run Aground; White, White You Just Might;
Blue, Blue Sail on Through; Green, Green Nice and Clean"
Shallow water appears very dark to the observer while deeper water appears blue or green. Sand covered bottoms appear white and may or may not be deep enough for your vessel to navigate.
- ❖ When in doubt about the depth, slow down and idle. Make sure the bow of the boat is down and the motor is trimmed or tilted up.
- ❖ Wear polarized sunglasses. Polarized sunglasses reduce surface glare to help you spot and avoid seagrass beds and animals such as manatees that feed in them.
- ❖ Keep track of the tides. The greatest range of tides (shallowest and deepest water) occurs during a full-moon and new-moon. Use extra caution when boating on a low tide.
- ❖ If you do run into a seagrass flat, you will be leaving a sediment trail behind your boat, making the water murky and probably cutting seagrass roots. Stop immediately and tilt your engine. Pole or push the boat into deeper water.
- ❖ Prop-dredging and seagrass scarring is an unnecessary impact to the natural resources that you can control. **Study your charts. Read the waters. Know your depth and draft.**