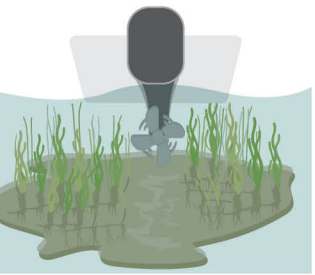
SCAR MAPS

Seagrass Conservation through Actionable Research: Management Areas for the Prevention of Scarring

Damage to seagrasses by **propeller scarring** in aquatic preserves of Florida's Nature Coast is a growing issue that is of increasing concern to managers and stakeholders, including anglers, fishing guides, natural resource managers, tour operators, and civic groups.



Stakeholder-driven management plans for **Aquatic Preserves in the Nature Coast** region repeatedly identify propeller scars as a priority issue and outline multiple actionable strategies related to propeller scarring and seagrass protection. These grow more important as boating pressure increases in the region. But, addressing propeller scars is complex. There are uncertainties that must be addressed before effective actions can be taken because managers lack the data needed to inform specifically how and where to act.

SCAR MAPS is a 5-year project funded through the **RESTORE Science Program's Actionable Science** call. Our team will collect geographic, biological, logistical, and socioeconomic data to pair with stakeholder guidance through a co-production model to address data gaps. The goal is to ultimately enable prudent, science-based decisions and management actions.

For more information, contact Savanna Barry at savanna.barry@ufl.edu or 352-325-6080

https://bit.ly/scar-maps

Data gaps to be addressed include:

- Exact location and severity of scarring hotspots
- The nature of socioeconomic outcomes of spatial zoning options such as pole-troll areas
- The magnitude of ecosystem impacts caused by propeller scarring
- Details that inform restoration needs and targets
- Best practices for implementing and enforcing management zones or policies
- Understanding how decision-makers weigh scientific information about propeller scarring
- Perceptions concerning proprietary and regulatory agency jurisdiction and authority

GOALS

The ultimate goal is to identify spatial areas to target for future seagrass propeller scarring prevention and subsequent restoration, based on the results of the scientific studies and stakeholder guidance. Recommendation of pole-troll zone(s) is one possible result of this project, but none are presently being proposed or pursued.

Project activities are guided by input from a stakeholder advisory committee that is made up of a broad array of members from groups such as boating & fishing clubs, for-hire charter captains, natural resource management and enforcement agencies, seagrass restoration practitioners, and local government staff.

Research for SCAR MAPS is funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's RESTORE Science Program under award NA23NOS4510305 to the University of Florida (UF). UF also works closely with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) within the regional Aquatic Preserves of the Nature Coast. Funding from FDEP supports UF to carry out monitoring programs within the Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve (NCAP). NCAP is managed by FDEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection. The views, statements, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the State of Florida or any of their sub-agencies. Seagrass Graphics: Integration and Application Network (ian.umces.edu/media-library). Bottom photo: Jeff Hall, FLTV.