

Seagrass Protection and Restoration Steering Committee Meeting #5

May 05, 2014 3:00pm – 5:00pm

Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve Office

700-1 Fisherman's Wharf, Fort Myers Beach, Florida 33931

Participants: Dr. Eric Milbrandt (Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation), Keith Laakkonen (Town of Fort Myers Beach), Thea Holting (University of Florida), Robert Brooks (Florida State Parks), Dr. James Douglass (Florida Gulf Coast University), Heather Stafford and Melynda Brown (Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves), Judy Ott (Charlotte Harbor National Estuaries Program), Al Durrett (Fish-Tale Marina), Joy Hazel (Florida Sea Grant), Cheryl Clark (Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve)

1. Reviewed March meeting minutes
2. Discussed potential protection and restoration areas outlined during March meeting
 - a. Heather believes there is a more detailed shapefile showing areas originally considered for protection in the NGP.
 - b. All areas that meet light, depth, sediment requirements and have protection needs should be mapped for future public use and mitigation projects (Althea).
 - i. Al indicated that education (possible signage) was needed to protect seagrass beds around Coon Key.
 - c. 500 ft State Part/Aquatic Preserve boundary management overlap could be used to assist with establishing protection zones.
 - d. The Estero Bay Seagrass Protection and Restoration Plan should be broad and data to assist with long-term protection and project needs.
3. Educational and Outreach
 - a. Signage for marking potential protection zones
 - i. Areas should be easily enforceable
 - ii. Signs for Education vs enforcement should be easily distinguishable
 - b. GPS rental Boats
 - i. Sea Grant will work with rental boats to map boat patterns
 1. Operation outside channels
 2. Heavy use areas
 3. Assist with education and channel marker placement
 - ii. Rental boat numbers (Joy)
 - iii. Published research on boat traffic (Joy)
 - c. Dr. Douglass will keep EBAP staff abreast of research happening in the bay
 - i. Rookery Bay has a database it uses to track research in the bay (Cheryl)
4. Sediment Conditions in the Bay
 - a. Judy would like to see sediment conditions mapped on a regional level
 - b. Map sediments to supplement light and depth data
 - i. Cons of SW Florida did a study in Estero Bay that included sediment sampling
 - ii. Althea has sediment data
 - iii. Anchorage sediment surveys available (Bob)

5. Seagrass Mapping and survey methods
 - a. Neckles et al. 2012, Est Coasts, seagrass monitoring
 - i. Dr. Milbrandt indicated that boat coverage surveys only look at leaf coverage and does not assess what we are looking for with prop scar monitoring and % coverage.
 - b. FWC has a square mile grid map for this area that is already established.
 - c. Orientation of scars needs to be included (mapping will show this) to determine if position in relation to currents etc affects recovery time.
 - d. There should be 6 categories to scale for prop scar severity (Mindy will find research)
6. Dr. Milbrandt indicated that there is an area off Bunche Beach that has live rock, seagrass, and corals and is exceptional habitat that should be protected and included within the AP boundary. Keith pointed out that Beaches and submerged lands are critical habitat for piping plover and red knot.
 - a.
7. Tasks for next meeting
 - James – write proposal
 - Althea – Map depicting all areas with suitable light and depth requirements.
 - Cheryl – Schedule June meeting, minutes, keep ftp site up, Map sediments, obtain research database from RBNERR,
 - Keith –
 - Joy – Rental Boat numbers, boat traffic lit,
 - Robert – list of parcels in the watershed that should be purchased to protect WQ
 - Bob – provide shapefile for Anchorage sediment surveys.
 - Mindy – research on prop scar severity scales.