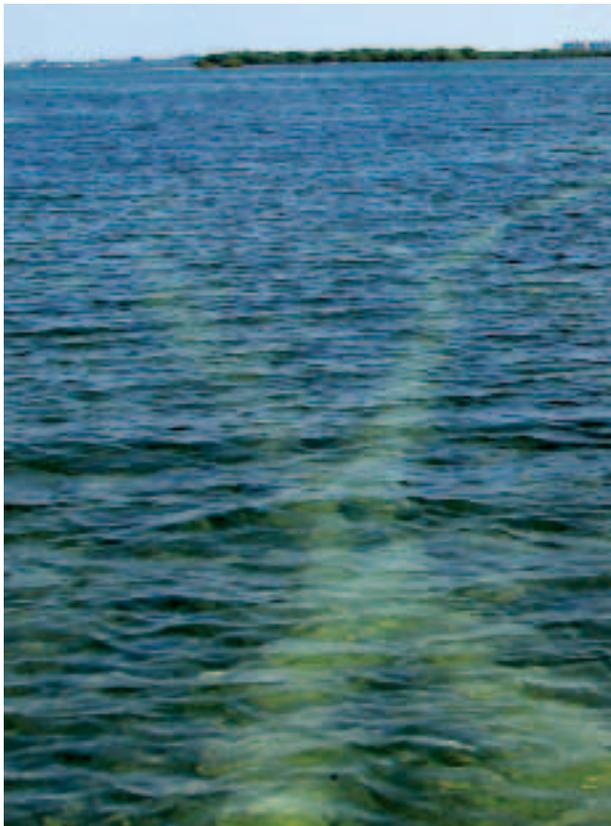


Widgeon Seagrass



Prop Scars

Sources of Information

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Florida Department of Environmental Protection's website "What Are Seagrasses?" web page at: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/habitats/seagrass/>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Fish and Wildlife Research Institute's website "Learn About Seagrasses" web page at: http://research.myfwc.com/features/view_article.asp?id=22607

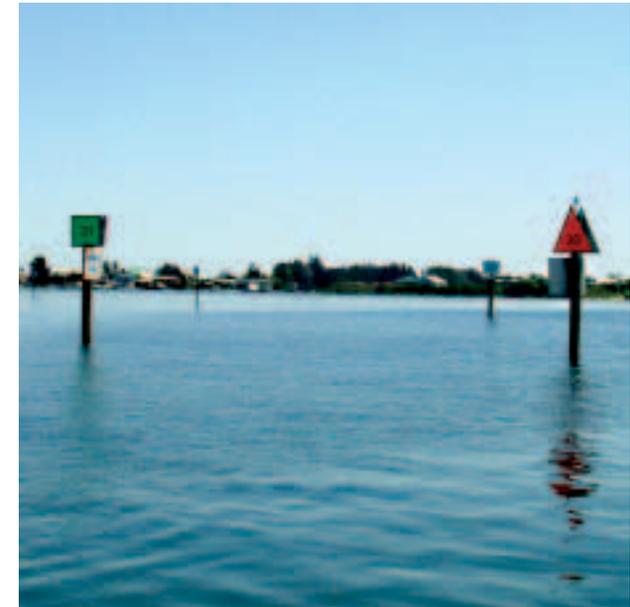
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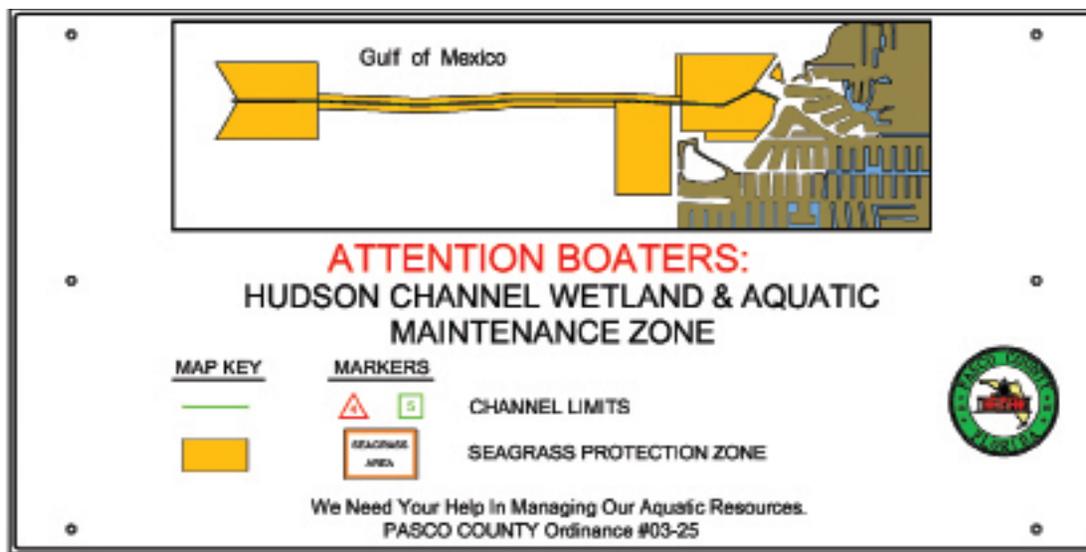
Pasco County Hudson Channel Seagrass Protection Zones



March 2009



Hudson Channel - Hudson, Florida



Hudson Channel Educational Sign

What are seagrasses and why are they important?

Seagrasses consist of a small group of flowering plants that are adapted to survive and reproduce in the marine environment. They are a vital part of the marine ecosystem.

Seagrasses provide food and habitat to a variety of marine species. These species include sport fish and endangered species such as the manatee and the green sea turtle. Seagrasses also help stabilize marine sediments and maintain water quality. Widgeon seagrass, a common seagrass, is shown in this brochure.

What is a Seagrass Protection Zone (SPZ)?

It is an area set aside from motorboat usage in order to protect and enhance the seagrasses and associated marine life, such as recreational finfish and crustaceans. A condition of the dredging permit required the protection of 290 acres of seagrasses through the establishment of SPZs. These zones are delineated with seagrass area signs.

What is a prop scar?

A prop scar (propeller scarring) of seagrasses usually occurs when boaters motor through water that is shallower than the drafts of their boats.

The boat propellers tear some combination of the seagrass leaves, stems and roots. This action can remove sediments which creates linear troughs of varying lengths.

The natural restoration of prop scars may take years depending on the size of the scar and the level of protection these areas receive. Sometimes entire beds can be lost as a result of multiple scars and destabilized sediments.

When was the channel dredged and what are its dimensions?

The channel was dredged in 2004/2005. The channel is 2.10 miles long, 40 ft wide and at least 4.4 ft deep relative to mean low water.

Why is the channel only 40 ft wide?

Permitting agencies wanted to minimize environmental impacts.

How many navigational markers were placed?

In total there are 31 navigational markers along the channel: 16 red and 15 green. Markers were staggered.

Is the speed in the channel regulated?

At this time it is not. Boaters are expected to comply with a courteous attitude and to observe safety measures while in the channel. This safety measure is especially important when approaching or passing other vessels.

I have a small motorboat. What can I do to avoid the wake of a larger boat wanting to pass me?

You are allowed to pull over so that you are outside of the channel. The pull over area is not for navigation and it is only to be used when absolutely necessary. This area is used to avoid larger vessels and/or their wakes or in the case of an emergency.

The pull over area will be shallower than the channel, so make certain to slow your speed and tilt up your engine. This action will prevent damage to your vessel and existing seagrasses. After the vessel has passed, move back into the channel and resume normal operations.

How is Pasco County protecting Seagrass Protection Zones?

Through education and smart boating practices. Only air boats, canoes or sailboats are allowed to operate in these areas without restriction. Jet skis are not allowed in Seagrass Protection Zones.

What Can You Do?

Please practice smart boating by avoiding navigation through the Seagrass Protection Zones and other shallow grass bed areas.

Pasco County hopes all persons using our waterways have a safe and enjoyable time. Always remember to use good judgement and safe boating practices.

**For More Information
Contact Pasco County
CALL 727-834-3611**