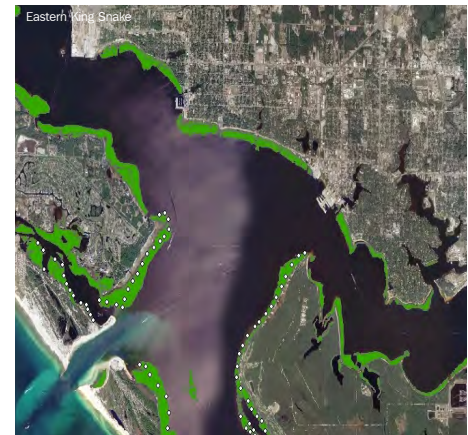
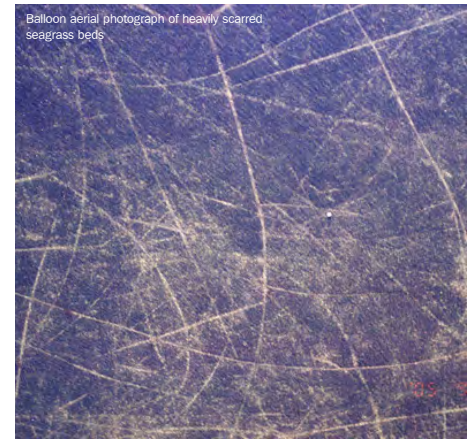




Management of vessel-related sea grass scars in St. Andrews Bay, Florida

Introduction:

Ecological effects of propeller scars contribute to sea grass habitat loss and decreased water quality. Research has revealed that natural recovery of propeller scars is extremely slow, taking 10 years or more.

Objectives:

1. Assess the use of non-regulatory sea grass markers as a management tool for protecting sea grass from vessel grounding damage;
2. Determine the effectiveness of Sediment Tubes® for sea grass restoration; and
3. Increase the rate of sea grass recovery in heavily propeller-scarred areas

Approach:

Aerial photography will be performed yearly for three years to determine changes (number, length and coverage) of propeller scars in large replicate photo plots. Sediment Tubes® developed by Seagrass Recovery Inc. will be placed into existing propeller scars to raise the elevations to ambient grade and stabilize sediments within scars. Percent-cover and shoot counts will measure propeller-scar recovery rates. Permanent transects will be used to monitor physical changes of propeller scars.

Benefits:

Success will be achieved if sea grass growth parameters within prop scars match those of adjacent beds, and the rate of sea grass scarring is reduced. Public outreach will promote environmental stewardship, whereas the project design offers educational, research and volunteer opportunities.

Location:

The project area is located on the bayside of Shell Island, within the boundaries of the St. Andrews Bay Aquatic Preserve and St. Andrews State Park. This location is defined as a Priority Habitat Area (seagrass habitat) and a FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area.

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