

SCAR MAPS: Combatting Seagrass Scarring on Florida's Nature Coast

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Introduction and Research Questions

Florida's Nature Coast is home to:

- **350,000** acres of seagrasses
- Countless **Florida native species**
- **Critical habitats** that provide valuable ecosystem services

Seagrass Scarring: Damage to seagrass beds cause by boat propellers.

This has been a **priority issue** for natural resource managers and stakeholders.



1. What is the stakeholder response to spatial zones and what are the factors that contribute to that response?
2. How effective are spatial zones for their primary intended purpose and what factors contribute to their effectiveness (or lack thereof)?
3. Do you have any lessons learned to share about the way zones are marked, evaluated, and/or maintained?
4. What are the current challenges that you currently face when establishing, enforcing, or maintaining zones?

Methods

Conducted **18 semi-structured interviews** with stakeholders:

- Biologists
- Managers
- Policymakers
- Law Enforcement
- Fishing charter guides

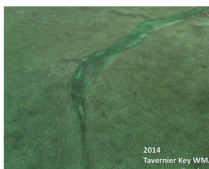
Research Design: **Qualitative Case Study**

Data Collection:

- Pre-Interview: participants sent question list
- 30-45 minute Zoom Interview

Data Analysis:

- Coding: Structural and Thematic
- Establish Themes and Subthemes



Aerial Imagery of Tavernier Key before and after establishment of no-motor wildlife management area.
Photo: Krueger



Results

Theme 1: Most stakeholders positively perceive spatial zones and their effectiveness.

Theme 2: Spatial zones are overwhelmingly effective at protecting seagrass beds.

Theme 3: Participants have varied recommendations for marking, enforcing, and maintaining depending on available funding and resources.

Theme 4: Participants face internal and external limitations on the effectiveness of the spatial zones and their ability to enforce them.

Conclusion & Discussion

Positive Perceptions

- Stakeholders have positive attitudes around seagrasses

Zoning Effectiveness Perceptions

- Zones are perceived as effective
- Lack of data to prove effectiveness and extent of protection

Stakeholder Recommendations

- Collaboration with agencies and public
- Large and clear signage
- Educational Enforcement
- Need for data

Challenges

- Lack of accurate data
- Lack of enforcement
- Stakeholder unawareness



Future Directions

In Practice:

- Guide marking and enforcement efforts
- Increase funding for and require monitoring studies
- Boost transparency with stakeholders

In SCAR MAPS:

- Final report
- Presentations with stakeholders



Funding and More



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