

General Discussion from Southwest Florida Seagrass Working Group meeting: October 6, 2011
Potential roles of Working Group:

SUPPORT FOR OTHER WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

- Letters of support for grants
- Email other members re: future grants and collaboration opportunities
- Develop a technical memo outlining the priorities of the SWFLSWG
- Emphasize regional support
- Possibly use an online forum through existing Water Atlases for communication between group members
- Can use page on TBEP Tech website to post Working Group items:
http://www.tbep.tech.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=30:sw-fl-seagrass-work-group&Itemid=55&layout=default
- Most present did not feel the need for additional wikis, blogs, etc.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- Set research priorities
 - o Summary of Tampa Bay seagrass transect data
 - Quantitative examination of changes over time
- Develop questions that need to be answered
- Development of seagrass depth limits and water quality that will support those (Sarasota Bay doesn't have yet)
- Evaluation of Tampa Bay transect and water quality relationship related to water quality target at deep edge of seagrass beds
- Fishing Catch per unit effort (CPUE): are people really catching more fish in seagrass now than in the past? Randy Edwards CPUE report
- Better link between seagrass and fisheries research
- Utilize existing data: we have a lot of data, we just have to ask the right questions

EDUCATION:

- Reach public through existing agencies (rather than as the SWFLSWG)
- Better communicate the value of seagrass
- Use terms that the average citizen can understand
- Tell a local story using technical information, "paint a picture"
- Ecological value of seagrass
- Return on investment of protecting/restoring seagrass
- Highlight charismatic mega fauna that rely on seagrass, e.g., manatees, sport fish
- Try to solicit support from sportsman groups, e.g., CCA
- Reinforce that our success at improving/maintaining seagrass came from using science and that we need to continue research
- Paint the picture of what it was like (bad old days), what it is like now (improved) and what it could be (worse) if we don't continue with our success
- Explain what we could stand to lose if we don't continue with research and management
- Target the right fish species

- Shift in community structure: use natural resources to reinforce new community based activities
 - convey/enhance value of connection to the local community
- Integration and Application Network for science communication tools: <http://ian.umces.edu/>

Thoughts from John Ryan, Sarasota County

Seagrass Working Group

Whereas

- Seagrass is a critical aquatic habitat vulnerable to degradation and loss
- Economic health depends on healthy and productive waterbodies

The SWG supports

- research
- restoration
- monitoring
- education
- funding

Florida Seagrass Bibliography online

Website with fast facts and good images for outreach and grant applications

Links to seagrass info websites – including SWG members

General ideas

Not too wordy or lengthy – refer to big docs like Carlson writes for stuff like that

Stay positive. Use wording that says the cup is half full.

Avoid caveats and absolutely accurate science speak – get the message across plainly