

Living on the Edge

The Balance Between Economy and Environment

Florida is a coastal state — *the environment matters.*
Floridians need jobs — *the economy matters.*

Most of Florida's 20 million residents live in coastal counties, and over 80 million tourists visit the coast each year. This concentration of people, activities and economies contributes more than 80% — almost \$562 billion — to the state's economy annually.

Florida Sea Grant is a university-based program that helps balance the growth of local economies with protection of the coastal environment. It has become the “go to” organization around the state on a wide range of issues affecting economic prosperity of coastal communities and businesses, as well as the protection of natural resources.



SCIENCE-BASED TOOLS THAT SAVE TAXPAYER DOLLARS

Florida is the nation's top boating destination, a boon to many coastal economies that has also intensified the need for more navigable waterways, improved boater safety and better protection of sensitive marine habitats — the health of which is a key reason that boating is so popular.

Florida Sea Grant waterways planning specialists have developed GIS-based tools that help communities more effectively manage their

waters, save tax dollars and reduce environmental impacts. Community planners and resource managers use these tools to estimate demand for boating facilities, streamline permitting for navigational access and quantify economic impacts derived from marinas and boat ramps.

According to the West Coast Inland Navigation District, Florida Sea Grant's waterway management system in Southwest Florida has saved taxpayers an estimated \$5 million since 2006.

FOSTERING GROWTH FOR AN EMERGING INDUSTRY

In Cedar Key, where about 80% of Florida's clam farming occurs, aquaculture has helped preserve a way of life. And clam farming now has a statewide economic impact of over \$50 million, supporting more than 550 jobs in Cedar Key alone.

Florida Sea Grant plays an integral role. Its legal extension team has assisted the community with proactive planning of a Community Redevelopment Area, a special finance district in which future increases in property values

are set aside to pay for working waterfront improvements. The team also helped clam farmers earn exemptions for their qualified waterfront aquaculture operations, saving them nearly \$27,000 in property tax each year. Cedar Key is now writing a customized floodplain ordinance so it can participate in the National Flood Insurance Community Rating System. The ordinance ensures that clam farmers can secure a variance from flood insurance rules that would otherwise require costly retrofits to their waterfront operations.



UF/IFAS/TYLER JONES



PROVIDING SCIENCE BEHIND THE STATE'S EVOLVING ARTIFICIAL REEF PROGRAM

Artificial reefs are man-made underwater habitats that support a variety of marine life. A recent economic analysis found that fishing and diving activity on artificial reefs provides 39,119 jobs annually to Floridians, generating \$3.1 billion in the state's economic activity and providing \$1.3 billion in income to Floridians.

To maximize economic benefit, it has become critical that reef managers be equipped with the best

available science to ensure reef deployment is done in a cost-effective and ecologically responsible manner. For more than three decades, Florida Sea Grant has contributed to the evolution of Florida's artificial reef building community, supporting the science and technical assistance needed to help communities plan their reef programs. In Southwest Florida, a Florida Sea Grant study estimates fishermen, divers and other artificial reef users contribute \$253 million annually to the economy of the populous six-county region.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Managing Florida's ocean and coastal resources for economic growth and sustainability becomes more complex each day. There is a critical need to support the educational development of future marine science professionals, as well as provide required training for those already in the coastal workforce.

As a university-based program with ties to 18 major research universities and over 800 faculty experts, Florida Sea Grant is uniquely positioned to respond to this challenge. It does not "teach" or "graduate" students in the tradition of an academic department. Sea Grant supports 30 to 40 college students each year through scholarship programs

and research projects, which require that a student actively work on the project.

Funding comes from both private and public sources, including the Aylesworth Foundation for the Advancement of Marine Science, the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation and the Florida Outdoor Writers Association.

With extension agents in more than 20 coastal counties, Florida Sea Grant can also provide locally relevant training that develops and supports a workforce critical to a sustainable economy. Extension agents and specialists typically provide required training to hundreds of professionals in seafood safety, oyster harvesting and processing, GIS-based applications and eco-friendly landscaping.



ROBERT ELLIS

ABOUT FLORIDA SEA GRANT A university-based program that supports research, education and extension to enhance economic opportunities for Floridians while protecting coastal resources. Sea Grant works in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Board of Education and Florida's citizens and governments. Outreach is integrated with UF/IFAS Extension at the University of Florida, one of the nation's leading land-grant universities.

For more information:
www.FISeaGrant.org

