



## ***A Resource Protection Course for Florida Bay Boaters***

### ***Eco-Mariner Education***

The clear waters and renowned flats fishing of Florida Bay draw an increasing number of boaters every year. However, navigating Florida Bay is complicated and requires great care. Inexperienced or careless boaters can easily damage seagrasses and mud flats with their propellers; churning up sediment and suffocating plants. Boats that run around risk not only damage to the boat but also damage the bay floor and leave lifeless trails that can take a decade or more to recover. *Eco-Mariner*, a resource protection-based boater education course, works to combat this damage through education.

### **Protecting Florida Bay**

*Eco-Mariner* is designed to teach boaters how to safely navigate the Bay's shallow waters and illustrates simple actions that can reduce the extent of fish and seagrass habitat damage. Developed by Bay users and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) the *Eco-Mariner* program is:

- ✓ **Informative**—practical information on preventing seagrass damage, current catch and release techniques, and much more.
- ✓ **Engaging**—interactive learning, using video content, animation and audio .
- ✓ **Innovative**—a resource-based course capable of being offered online, in a classroom, or at mobile learning stations.
- ✓ **Shared Stewardship**—instills a sense of community stewardship among mariners to protect Florida Bay.

The full release of *Eco-Mariner* is Earth Day 2009, April 22nd. Visit [www.ecomariner.org](http://www.ecomariner.org).



© Everglades National Park

**Everglades National Park** is located at the southern tip of Florida. The park's 1.5 million acres comprise the largest designated subtropical wilderness in North America and include much of Florida Bay.

**Florida Bay** is a marine lagoon that:

- ✓ supports a host of recreationally and commercially important fishes;
- ✓ is home to a number of federally listed threatened and endangered species;
- ✓ is the most significant breeding ground for wading birds in North America; and
- ✓ is part of the largest preserved mangrove system in the Western Hemisphere.



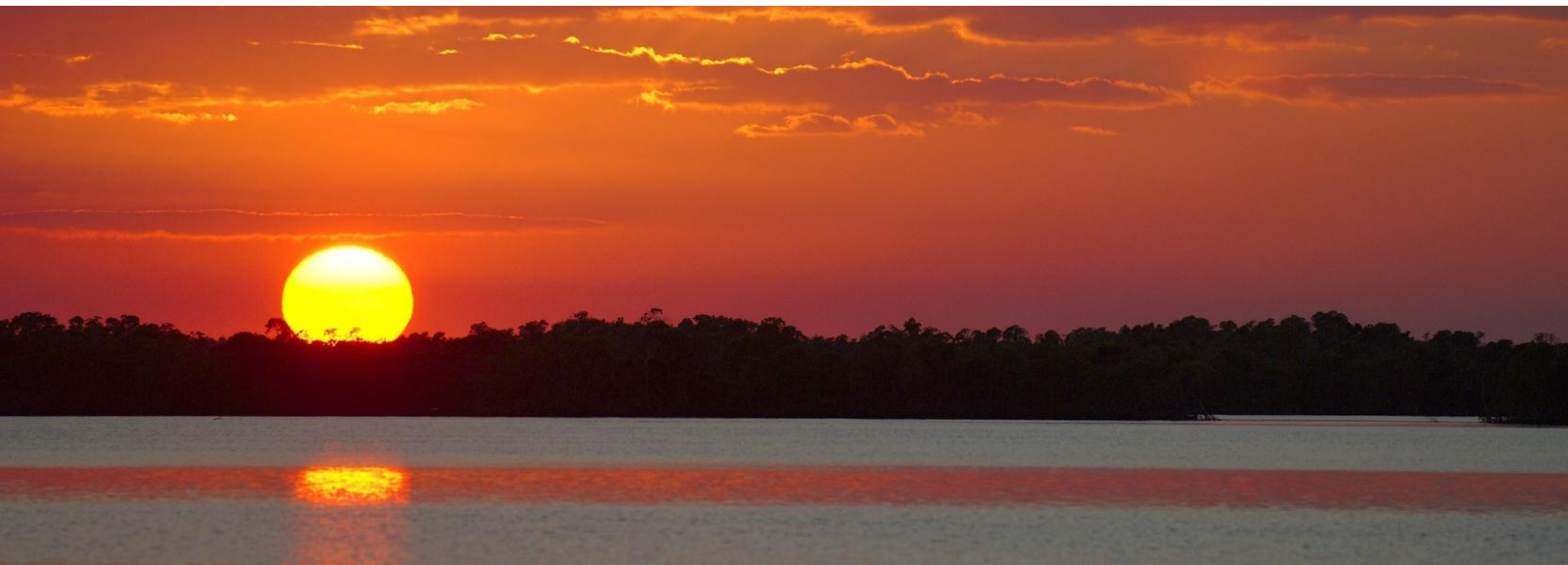
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### **Florida Bay Fisheries Support Local Economy**

The total economic value of fishing in Florida is roughly valued at \$10 billion, much of it driven by fisheries in Florida Bay. The Bay provides the critical habitat that makes it a world-class destination for recreational anglers as well as the nursery grounds that form the foundation of commercial fishing in the waters bordering Florida Bay.



**National Parks Conservation Association®**  
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®



## Six Ways for Resource Protection in Florida Bay

1. **Know Before You Go:** Read your charts and plan ahead for tides, weather, and fuel.
2. **Use Your Eyes:** Always have polarized sunglasses. Look out for shallow water and marine animals.
3. **Slow Down:** Idle your boat out to deeper water to get on plane and slow down to avoid hitting a manatee or sea turtle.
4. **Take the Long Way Around:** Never cut across a flat, instead, use marked channels.
5. **Trim Your Engine:** Know how to trim your engine to reduce your environmental impact.
6. **Give Wildlife a Chance:** Treat wildlife with respect—don't leave trash behind and use proper catch and release methods



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