

# Seagrass/Mangrove Ecology Program

**Grade Level:** All

**Timing:** 3 hours

**Summary:** This program was specifically created for school groups who are with us 1-1.5 days. The seagrass and mangrove ecology programs are a part of MarineLab's core curriculum. Seagrass beds make up the largest benthic habitat in the waters surrounding the Florida Keys and mangrove forests make up the majority of the natural coastal habitat in the Florida Keys. We want all students who visit MarineLab, regardless of the length of time they are with us, to experience Florida Bay and understand the interconnection these inshore habitats have with the coral reef. The boat and the outdoors are our classroom for this program which includes a discussion of the importance of these habitats and identifying characteristics of our mangroves before snorkeling a site providing a glimpse of both seagrass and mangrove habitats.

## **Program Objectives:**

After completion, students will be able to:

- Identify three seagrass species, three algae species, three mangroves and three animals that utilize the inshore habitats
- Explain the role of the seagrass and mangrove habitats within the FL Keys marine ecosystem
- List three threats to the seagrass habitat

## **Concepts Covered:**

- Function of the seagrass and mangrove habitats in the overall keys ecosystem
- Distinguishing characteristics of algae and grass
- Seagrass and algae identification
- Three species of mangroves in the FL Keys and their identifying characteristics
- Mangrove adaptations
- Bird identification

**Vocabulary:** calcareous, obligate halophyte, facultative halophyte, prop root, pneumatophore, adaptation, zonation, salt exclusion/excretion, exotic species

**Procedures:** Once aboard the boat, concepts and vocabulary listed above will be discussed. Students will snorkel the seagrass/mangrove habitat. Instructor will collect samples of seagrass, algae, and representative invertebrates to bring back to the boat for discussion.

**Extensions:**

**Resources:** [www.seagrasswatch.org](http://www.seagrasswatch.org), <http://seagrass.fiu.edu/>, <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/plants/seagrass.html>



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Last Updated: 8/30/2018



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