

SWFWMD-SWIM ACCURACY ASSESSMENT OF THE BIENNIAL SEAGRASS MAPPING



Project Description

Scheda scientists, who are also U.S. Coast Guard licensed watercraft captains, utilized randomly produced latitude and longitude coordinates to field-verify the 2010 aerially-derived SWFWMD seagrass mapping product. To assist the SWFWMD in accuracy verification of mapped seagrass communities for the Charlotte Harbor, Sarasota Bay, Tampa Bay and St. Joseph Sound estuaries, locations that were mapped as either having seagrass present or absent were examined by aqua scope surface viewer, direct diving inspection, or remote underwater video to verify presence or absence. In addition, other field assessment information was also obtained, including species identification, densities, relative abundance of epiphytes and relative water depth. This information, coupled with an understanding of the relative scale of the mapping product, results in a more refined product that can be used over time to understand trends in relative abundance of this valuable resource.

Scheda scientists assisted the SWFWMD biologist in recording over 250 verification points for comparison to the recently mapped submerged aquatic vegetation communities. The project was renewed to include verification of the 2012, 2014, and 2016 mapping product. The project was recently expanded again to include verification monitoring of offshore areas from Citrus to Pasco counties. Over 1,000 sites were field verified for this effort.

