



# Blue Meadows Code: Boaters



[www.bluemeadows.org](http://www.bluemeadows.org)





The Ocean Conservation Trust promotes positive action for our Ocean by encouraging positive change amongst individuals, communities, businesses, and policymakers alike. Our Blue Meadows initiative focuses on seagrass conservation. With the goal of protecting remaining seagrass habitats and restoring what we have lost.

We recognise that boaters, like you, can be remarkable stewards of the sea. Your personal, in-depth knowledge of the Ocean and your attachment to its elements – the salt, the waves and the wind – are invaluable for the health of the Ocean.

Your connection to the Ocean can be a great motivator to take action for Ocean protection.

Developed by our team of Ocean enthusiasts, through numerous conversations with boaters and water users, our Blue Meadows Code offers a one-stop shop to give you all the information you need on seagrass and how to safeguard this valuable habitat.

We hope this gives you a simple guide to continue enjoying what you love and protect the Ocean for the future.



What is  
seagrass?



The world's only marine flowering plant, seagrass, is full of surprises. Vital in keeping our seas clean and healthy they provide us with numerous benefits and make the Ocean a better place for everyone to enjoy.

These luscious meadows are similar to the plants you might find in your garden and have seeds and a root system. Restricted to sunlit shallow waters, seagrasses grow in water up to 10m depth.



How does seagrass  
support  
the boating  
community?



- Seagrass meadows are a vital habitat for protected species like seahorses, providing amazing biodiversity for us to enjoy whilst on the water.
- These meadows are an important nursery for grounds for commercially caught species, supporting our fisheries. If you're fishing whilst out on your boat – either for fun or for your livelihood – seagrass meadows are essential for maintaining healthy fish populations.
- With their extensive root systems, seagrass helps to stabilise the seabed, reduce coastal erosion and protect coastal infrastructure such as harbours and docks, creating safe anchorages and moorings for boaters to use.
- Seagrass ensures cleaner, healthier waters for diving, swimming and exploration, by removing chemicals, excess nutrients and diseases from surrounding seawater.
- Storing vast amounts of carbon, seagrass meadows are critical in combatting climate change. As well as storing carbon, seagrasses produce oxygen, with every second breath we take coming from the Ocean.
- A healthy Ocean sustained by healthy seagrass meadows support a healthy community. Whether we enjoy the Ocean in, on and around it, our connection to the Ocean enhances our wellbeing, health and sense of belonging within our communities.



# Why do we need a Blue Meadows Code?

This Code sets out some simple actions that the community can do together. If everyone follows these steps, we can ensure healthy seagrass meadows for years to come.

Things aren't looking so good for many seagrass meadows right now. They are one of our fastest declining habitats, with a football pitch-sized area lost every half an hour across the globe. Seagrass deserves our respect and a helping hand to ensure that it thrives for future generations.

Many human activities negatively impact seagrass meadows. From nutrient runoff and pollution to climate change and physical disturbance caused by certain boating and recreational activities. Our Blue Meadows code aims to help people take the right steps towards supporting our seagrass meadows, and of course, enjoy the Ocean!



# How boating can affect seagrass?

Physical disturbance to seagrass from anchors, certain fishing methods, boat propellers and mooring chains can cause significant damage which takes the meadow many years to recover from. Impacts caused from boating can include:

- Direct abrasions to seagrass roots and leaves from anchors and chains hitting the seabed, or nets being set.
- Anchors dragging along the seabed ripping up plants, causing bare patches known as anchor scars.
- Heavy mooring chains from traditional swing moorings, cause large abrasions, or mooring scars, as the chain moves with the ebb and flow of the tide and wind.
- Boat propellers and hulls scraping along the seagrass in shallow water, damaging the habitat.



## Traditional swing moorings

Traditional swing moorings consist of a heavy chain attached to a concrete block or anchor and a surface buoy. With the rise and fall of the tide, the heavy chain is left to lie along the seabed.

The chain gets pulled around in a circle with the movement of the wind and tides, resulting in abrasions which remove seagrass and leave bare patches on the seabed.

# Boating with care:

- Look out for our Blue Meadows yellow marker buoys indicating the presence of seagrass and designating a voluntary no anchor zone (VNAZ) – make sure to anchor outside of this zone.
- Observe speed restrictions for your safety, the safety of other water users' and wildlife! Be mindful of your wake in shallower areas.
- Follow local fishing regulations and sustainable fishing practices to preserve our fish populations and habitats.
- Know your tide times and the local area. No one wants to get caught out on the wrong side of low tide and run aground. Plan your route through inshore waters carefully, to avoid damaging the seabed and your boat!
- Navigational apps like Savvy Navvy can be a useful tool to locate nearby seagrass and moorings, particularly if you are new to an area.
- Use Advanced Mooring Systems (AMS) designed to reduce the impacts of traditional style moorings, they are just as easy to use!







### Here are some top tips for using AMS;

- Check the bay and mooring are suitable for your vessel.
- Ensure you are attaching your mooring line to the eye of the buoy.
- Stick to weight limits to ensure your boat is supported by the AMS, especially if you are rafting alongside another vessel.
- It's easier to approach from upwind. Always check the weather conditions before mooring.
- Always double check the strength of your knots throughout your stay.
- Never attach to anything below the water line, or to any part of the buoy other than the eye.

## Top tips for anchoring:

- Check your anchor regularly to minimise dragging. If it is dragging, raise it and re-anchor.
- Raise your anchor correctly when departing an anchorage, ensure to begin pulling when your bow is close to the anchor for a smoother extraction.
- Mark your chain at intervals (1m and 5m) to correctly be able to count the right amount of chain to drop.

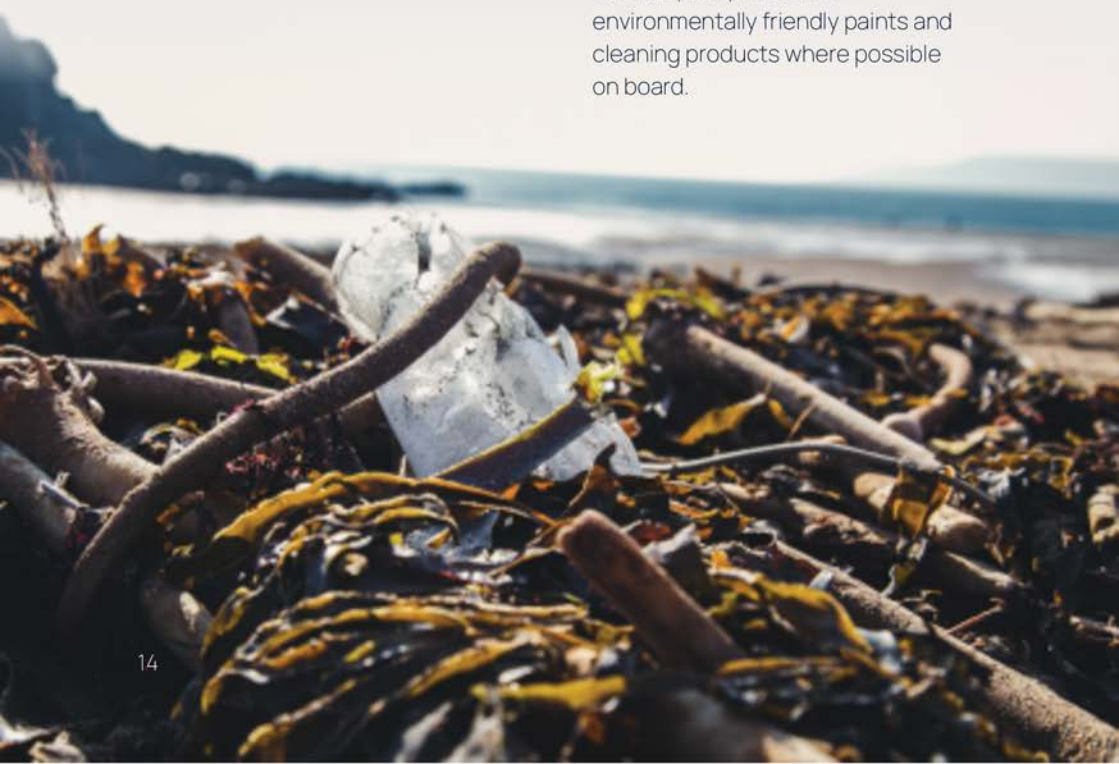


# Protecting seagrass from pollution

Nobody likes being in dirty water, neither do seagrass plants! Seagrasses can uptake nutrients, pathogens and harmful bacteria from the water helping to keep our waters clean. However, excess pollution can overwhelm seagrass, so that they are unable to survive.

High quantities of nitrogen, which can come from multiple sources, such as sewage and run off, cause algae to grow which can block the light these plants need to survive. Here are some things you can do to ensure you are helping the seagrasses to thrive:

- Choose reef-safe sunscreen, to avoid harmful chemicals entering the Ocean.
- If you are on a boat, ensure oil and fuel do not enter the water by installing a bilge filter and keeping spill kits on hand.
- Use onshore toilets wherever possible.
- Dispose of rope, fishing fragments, cigarette butt's and other litter properly. Take your litter home or to an eco-friendly marina to recycle.
- Use low phosphate and environmentally friendly paints and cleaning products where possible on board.



## What else can I do?

Supporting seagrass isn't limited to being on the water. When you're at home or on the go you can still play a part in protecting seagrass;

- Have a conversation about seagrass! Spread the word, tell your friends and family.
- Take the Think Ocean Challenge to see how your personality can help protect the Ocean. <https://thinkocean.oceanconservationtrust.org>
- Join our Blue Meadows Bulletin to stay updated on our work and all things seagrass. <https://bluemeadows.org/get-involved/>
- Download the seagrass spotter app and join a global community helping to map seagrass across the planet. <https://seagrassspotter.org>
- Take steps within your daily life to reduce your carbon footprint.
- Share this code with your fellow boaters!



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Find out more about Blue Meadows  
[www.bluemeadows.org](http://www.bluemeadows.org)

Blue Meadows - Seagrass protection,  
regeneration and restoration

