



Blue Meadows Code: Recreational Water Users





Here at the Ocean Conservation Trust we encourage positive action through pro-Ocean behaviour and habitat restoration, inspiring positive change amongst individuals, communities, businesses, and policymakers alike. Our Blue Meadows initiative focuses on seagrass conservation, aiming to protect what we have left and restore what we have lost.

We recognise that water users like you, are remarkable stewards of the sea. Your personal in-depth, knowledge of the Ocean and your commitment to its elements - the salt, the waves and the wind - are invaluable for the health of the Ocean.

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 know you want to help support a healthy Ocean, so we want to empower your efforts in protecting our precious marine environment.

We hope this empowers you to continue enjoying what you love and protect the ocean for futures to come.



Why protect 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 our
communities?



- Seagrass meadows are a vital habitat for protected species like seahorses, providing amazing biodiversity for us to enjoy whilst in and 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 the water, seagrass meadows are essential for maintaining healthy fish populations.
- With their extensive root systems, seagrass helps to stabilise the seabed and reduce coastal erosion protecting our coastline. This natural protection makes our beaches and water ways safer to enjoy, whether we are on the shore or in the water.
- 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!



Respectful recreation

Physical disturbance from paddle boards, jet skis, snorkel fins and oars can cause significant damage to seagrass meadows, often uprooting entire plants! Whether you are a snorkeller, jet ski-er, swimmer or stand-up paddle boarder, here are some ways to make your recreational activities seagrass supportive and enjoy these habitats without causing harm:

- Plan ahead and know your tide times. Avoid dragging heavy kayaks, jet skiing at low tide and trampling seagrass which causes a lot of damage to the plants.
- Know where your local seagrass meadow is located. Use an App like Savvy Navy to help you.
- Use designated jet ski lanes to ensure safety for yourself, other water users and wildlife.
- Be mindful of your wake. Excess wash can cause damage to seagrass meadows and the wildlife that live there.
- If you are snorkelling over seagrass, be sure to float gently over the beds with gentle kicks to avoid fins tangling in the leaves.
- Never stand on seagrass, with fins or feet.
- Give wildlife space. Remember it is illegal to disturb certain species like the seahorse so make sure to keep a safe distance whether you are on or in the water.



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.
- Use onshore toilets wherever possible.
- Pick up after your dog.
- Don't be a litter bug, take your litter home and recycle it correctly.
- Dispose of BBQ's correctly, don't leave them on the beach.

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>
- Take steps within your daily life to reduce your carbon footprint.
- 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>
- If possible, change cleaning products to eco-friendly ones, to reduce harmful chemicals ending up in the Ocean via the sewage system.
- Share this code with your fellow water users!



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Find out more about Blue Meadows
www.bluemeadows.org

Blue Meadows - Seagrass protection,
regeneration and restoration

