Eyes on Seagrass Blitz in the Indian River Lagoon

What is the Eyes on Seagrass Blitz?

Eyes on Seagrass is a participatory science program that monitors the health and status of Florida's seagrass population. The Eyes on Seagrass Blitz is a two-week effort between November 1-15 to collect data on the presence of seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon. These data will allow us to better understand the current range of seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon and help inform future monitoring and restoration work.

The Eyes on Seagrass Blitz will rely on residents to report seagrass using the Seagrass Spotter App. Do you spend time out on the Indian River Lagoon? Whether you are a fisher spending time out on your boat or a kayaker who enjoyed paddling the lagoon, if you are out on the water, you can contribute!

How to participate in the Eyes on Seagrass Blitz

Before going out on the water:

1. Download the Seagrass Spotter app in the Apple App store or Google Play store to your phone and create a free account.
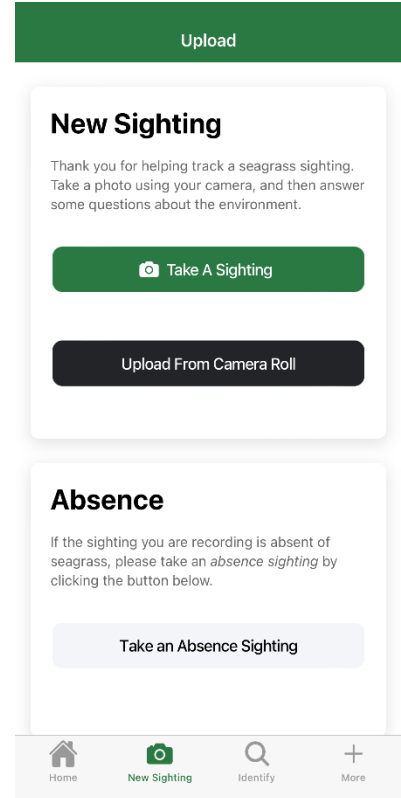
   If you prefer, you can create an account on the computer version of the program at https://seagrassspotter.org/

2. Complete the Eyes on Seagrass Volunteer form.

3. Review the Eyes on Seagrass Species ID Guide.

4. Read the full instructions below and download or print a copy of the shortened field protocol to have with you when you are out on the water.

4. Ensure that you have all the proper safety gear on your vessel and check that the weather conditions are safe to be out on the water. Low wind conditions are ideal for both your safety and visibility through the water's surface.

While you are out on the water between November 1 and November 15, 2024

1. Look for seagrass in the areas where you usually boat or paddle. You will likely find seagrass in shallow water, so be sure to take care if you are in a motor vessel. Travel at a slow speed and trim up your engine when necessary to avoid damaging seagrass.   Learn more about how to be a seagrass safe boater at https://beseagrasssafe.com/
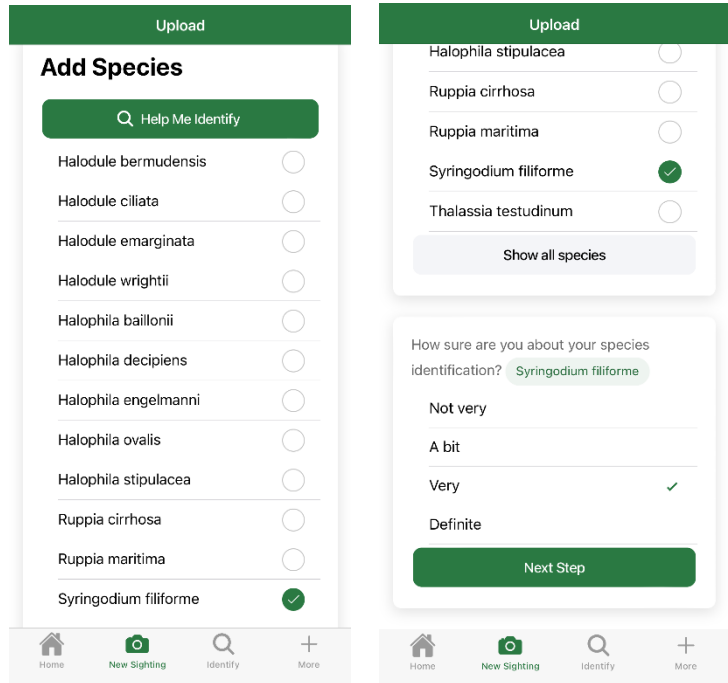
2. When you see seagrass, open your Seagrass Spotter app and click "New Sighting" at the bottom. Click "Take A Sighting" and take a photo of the seagrass from above, looking down at the seagrass, as seen in the image below. Once you take the photo, you will see a notification "getting location" pop up for a few sections as the app uses your phone's location to mark the sighting location in the app.
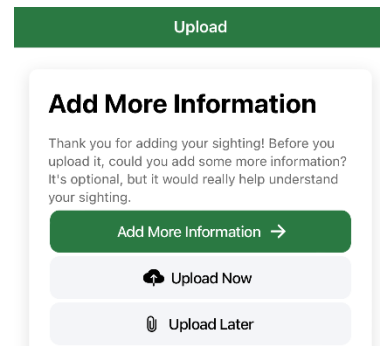
3. You will be asked to add the species, which are listed by scientific name. This list includes species from all over the world.

Reference our Eyes on Seagrass Species ID Guide to help you determine the species of seagrass, then choose it from the list.

Answer the question "How sure are you about your species identification?" as "not very, a bit, very, or definite" based on the confidence in your species ID.

4. The app will ask if you would like to add more information, which is optional. We encourage you to continue with the next step (click "Add More Information"), but if you prefer you can just hit "Upload Now" and you are done!
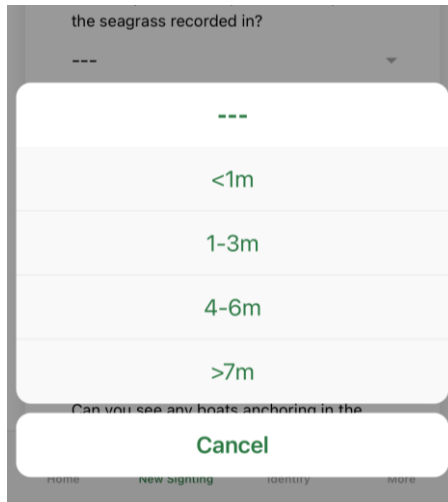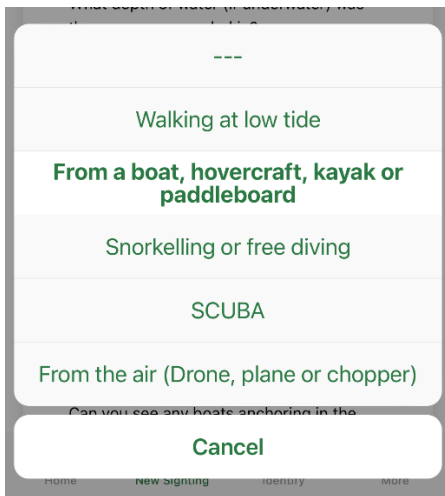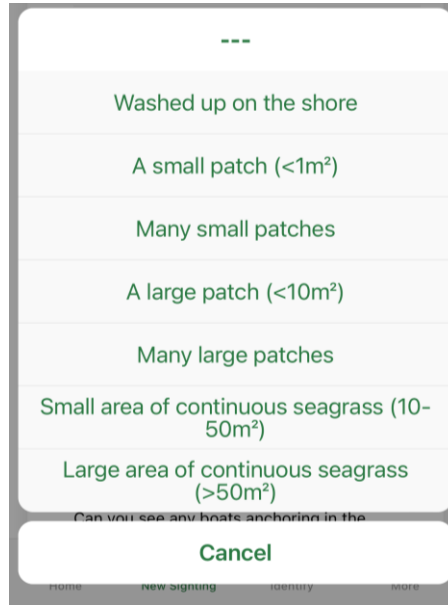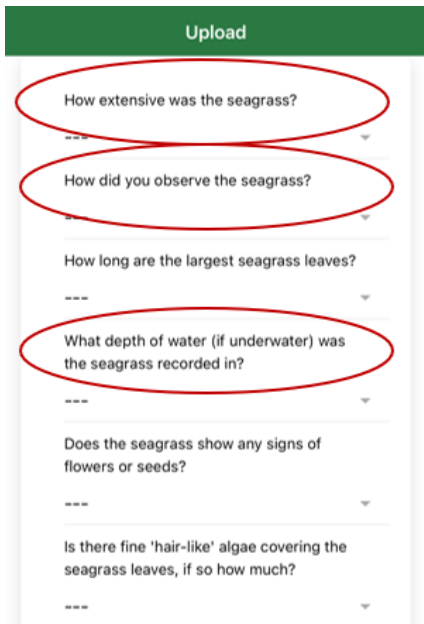
5. If you are willing to add more information about water depth and seagrass extent, you will see a series of questions appear. There are many questions listed, but there are three questions we would like you to answer:

- How extensive was the seagrass?
- How did you observe the seagrass?
- What depth of water was the seagrass recorded in?
    You will likely see seagrass in either <1m (less than approximately 3 feet depth) or between 1-3 m (between 3-10 feet). If you are in a kayak, you can estimate this using your paddle to measure depth.

When you click on each question you will see a drop-down menu with options to choose from.

6. Hit "Upload Now" and your entry will be submitted. Thank you for submitting your entry to the Seagrass Spotter app!

Note: If you do not want to input all the data while you are out on the water, you are able to click "Upload Later" and come back to the entry once you are on land.

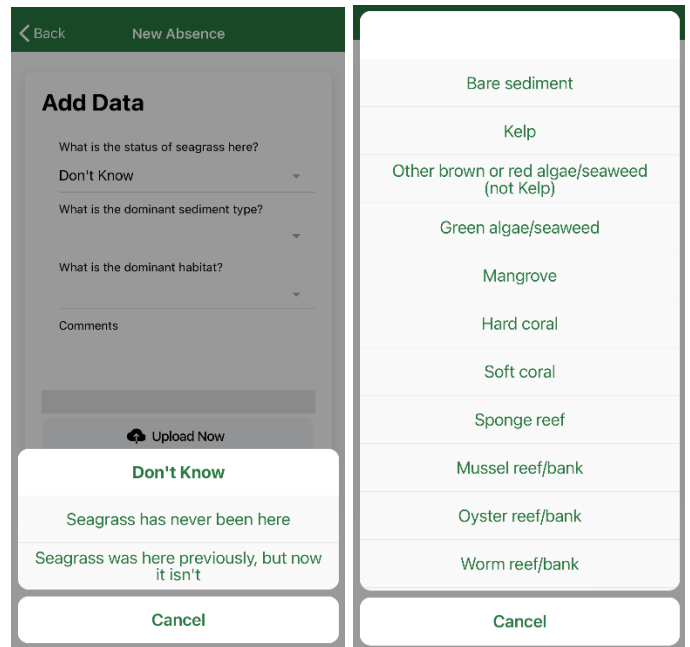## *What if I don't see seagrass?*

We still want your data! Knowing where sea grass is not located is just as important as knowing where it is. Please upload an absence sighting. You will also use an absence sighting to record if you see the green algae *Caulerpa* growing on the seafloor.
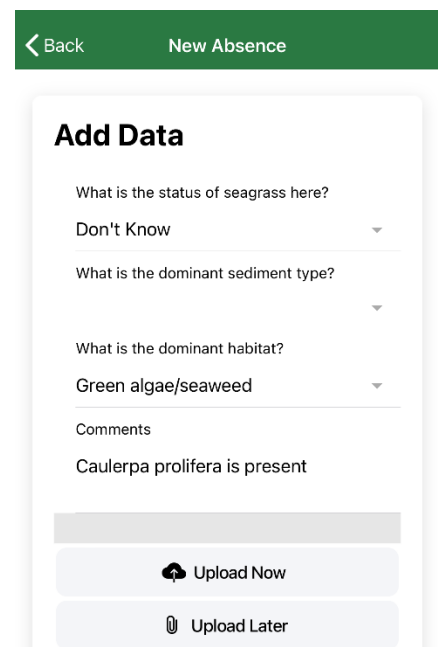
Making an absence sighting

If you do not see seagrass in an area, you can upload an Absence Sighting. Before submitting an absence sighting, ensure that you can see down to the seafloor to where seagrass would potentially be growing.

This process is like making a presence sighting, with slightly different questions. Take a photo and answer the questions to the best of your ability in the app before submitting:

- What is the status of seagrass here?

- What is the dominant habitat type?

  - In our area, this will likely be bare sediment, although it may be algae/seaweed or oyster reef.
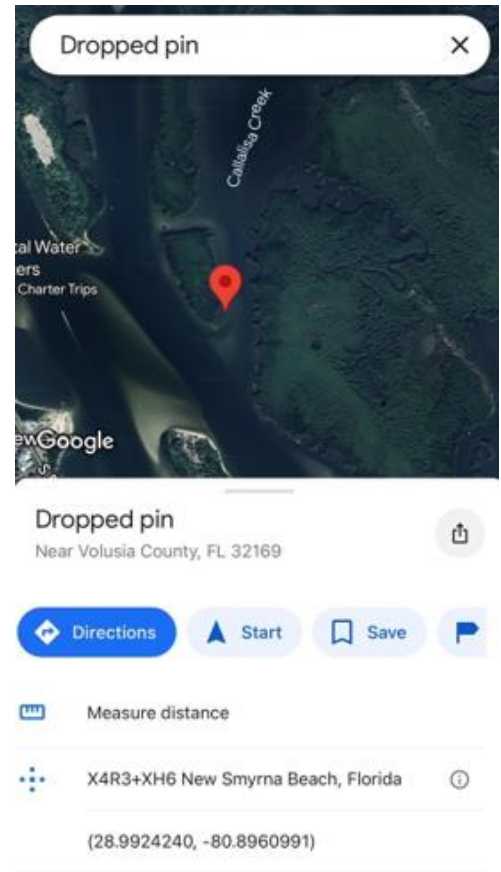

If you observe the green algae *Caulerpa prolifera*, please record an absence sighting, select "Green algae/seaweed" as the dominant habitat, and make a note in the comment section that *Caulerpa prolifera* was present.
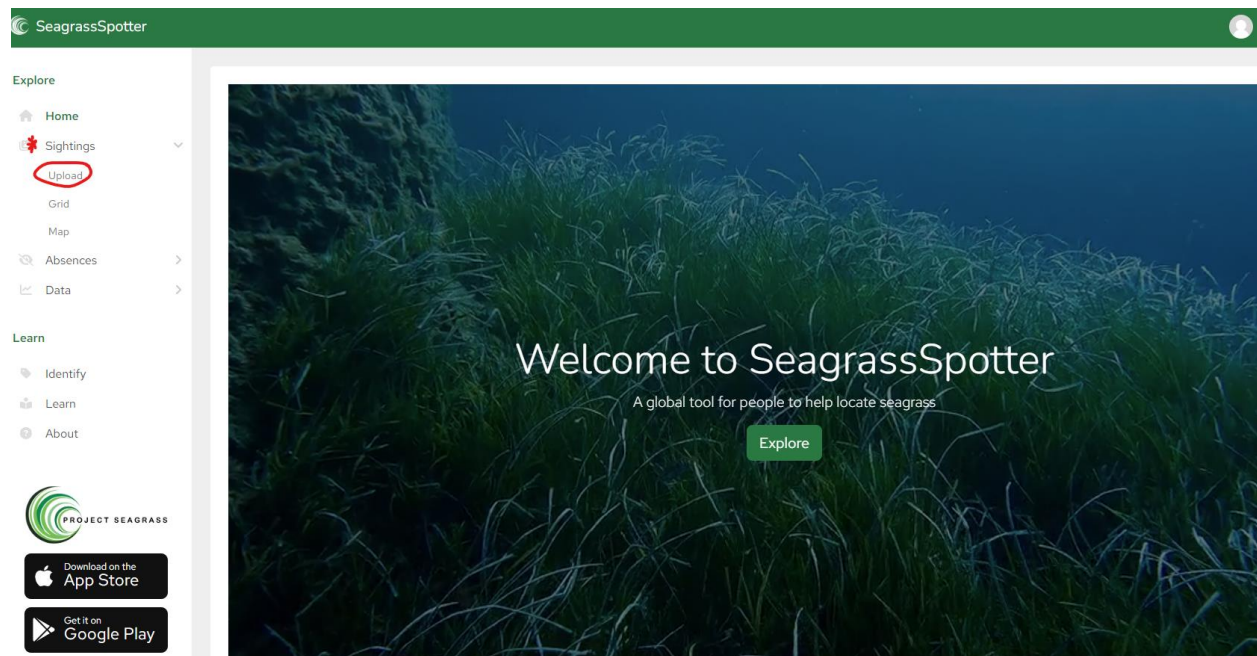
Inputting your data using the Seagrass Spotter Website instead of the app

You can take a photo while out on the water and then upload the image and data via your phone or a computer once you return home. If you do this, you will have to mark the location where you took the photo on their online map. Therefore, we recommend making a note of where you are when you take the photo or dropping a pin on your phone's map so that you can reference the GPS coordinates.

If you choose to use a computer to make the upload, you will need to visit the seagrasspotter.org website and log in to your account.

Click "Sightings" on the left and then "Upload"

You will need to mark the location on the map. If you have recorded your GPS coordinates in the field, you can type them in under "Lat" and "Lon" and it will move your marker to the spot. If you need to mark the location manually, zoom in and move the screen until your marker is in the correct spot. Write the estimated accuracy of your point to where the photo was taken in meters. Hit Next.
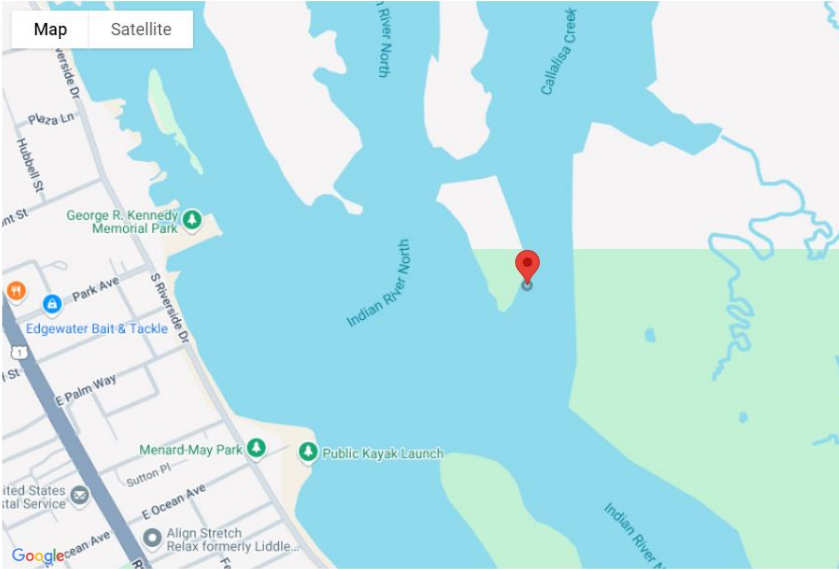

Put in the date of your sighting, and then answer the additional questions in the same way as described above in the instructions for using the Seagrass Spotter app.

Thank you for participating in the Eyes on Seagrass Blitz in the Indian River Lagoon!

Please reach out to your local Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent with questions:

Volusia County: Carolyn Kovacs, c.kovacs@ufl.edu

Brevard County: Holly Abeels, habeels@ufl.edu

Indian River: Natural Resources Agent, Andrea Lazarri a.lazzari11@ufl.edu

Martin and St. Lucie Counties: Vincent Encomio, vencomio@ufl.edu

General questions: Regional Specialized Agent Lisa Krimsky, lkrimsky@ufl.edu