

**Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures  
Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV), Marsh or Mangrove Habitat  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service  
August 2001**

**Submerged Aquatic Vegetation:**

1. Avoidance. The pier shall be aligned so as to minimize the size of the footprint over SAV beds.
2. The height of pier shall be a minimum of 5 feet above MHW/OHW as measured from the top surface of the decking.
3. The width of the pier is limited to a maximum of 4 feet. A turnaround area is allowed for piers greater than 200 feet in length. The turnaround is limited to a section of the pier no more than 10 feet in length and no more than 6 feet in width. The turnaround shall be located at the midpoint of the pier.
4. Over-SAV bed portions of the pier shall be oriented in a north-south orientation to the maximum extent that is practicable.
5. a. If possible, terminal platforms shall be placed in deep water, waterward of SAV beds or in an area devoid of SAV beds.  
  
b. If a terminal platform is placed over SAV areas and constructed of grated decking, the total size of the platform shall be limited to 160 square feet. The grated deck material shall conform to the specifications stipulated below. The configuration of the platform shall be a maximum of 8 feet by 20 feet. A minimum of 5 feet by 20 feet shall conform to the 5-foot height requirement; a 3 feet by 20 feet section may be placed 3 feet above MHW to facilitate boat access. The long axis of the platform should be aligned in a north-south direction to the maximum extent that is practicable.  
  
c. If the terminal platform is placed over SAV areas and constructed of planks, the total size of the platform shall be limited to 120 square feet. The configuration of the platform shall be a maximum of 6 feet by 20 feet of which a minimum 4-foot wide by 20-foot long section shall conform to the 5-foot height requirement. A section may be placed 3 feet above MHW to facilitate boat access. The 3 feet above MHW section shall be cantilevered. The long axis of the platform should be aligned in a north-south direction to the maximum extent that is practicable. If the 3 feet above MHW section is constructed with grating material, it may be 3 feet wide.
6. One uncovered boat lift area is allowed. A narrow catwalk (2 feet wide if planks are used, 3 feet wide if grating is used ) may be added to facilitate boat maintenance along the outboard side of the boat lift and a 4-foot wide walkway may be added along the stern end of the boat lift, provided all such walkways are elevated 5 feet above MHW. The catwalk shall be cantilevered from the outboard mooring pilings (spaced no closer than 10 feet apart).
7. Pilings shall be installed in a manner which will not result in the formation of sedimentary deposits("donuts" or "halos") around the newly installed pilings. Pile driving is the preferred method of installation, but jetting with a low pressure pump may be used.
8. The spacing of pilings through SAV beds shall be a minimum of 10 feet on center.
9. The gaps between deckboards shall be a minimum of ½ inch.

**Marsh:**

1. The structure shall be aligned so as to have the smallest over-marsh footprint as practicable.
2. The over-marsh portion of the dock shall be elevated to at least 4 feet above the marsh floor.
3. The width of the dock is limited to a maximum of 4 feet. Any exceptions to the width must be accompanied by an equal increase in height requirement.

**Mangroves.**

1. The width of the dock is limited to a maximum of 4 feet.
2. Mangrove clearing is restricted to the width of the pier.
3. The location and alignment of the pier should be through the narrowest area of the mangrove fringe.

### **Grid Specifications and Suppliers**

The following information does not constitute a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers endorsement or advertisement for any particular provider and is provided only as an example for those interested in obtaining these materials for dock construction. A type of fiberglass grate panel is manufactured by SeaSafe (Lafayette, LA; phone: 1-800-326-8842) and FiberGrate (1-800-527-4043). Plastic grate panels are also available from **Southern Pine Lumber Company (Stuart, FL; phone: 772-692-2300)**. Panels are available in a variety of sizes and thicknesses. For safety, the grate should contain an anti-slip texture which is integrally molded into the top surface. The manufacturer or local distributor should be consulted to ensure that the load-bearing capacity of the selected product is sufficient to support the intended purpose. Contact the manufacturer(s) for product specifications and a list of regional distributors.

**Key<sup>1</sup> for Construction Conditions for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed  
in or Over Johnson's Seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*)  
National Marine Fisheries Service/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
October 2002**

- 1a. The construction site is within the known range of Johnson's seagrass occurrence (Sebastian Inlet to central Biscayne Bay in the lagoonal systems on the east coast of Florida). *Go to 2.*
- 1b. The construction site is not within the known range of Johnson's seagrass occurrence but submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is present at the site. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001.
- 1c. The construction site is not within the range of Johnson's seagrass and SAV is not present at the site: *No construction conditions for SAV are necessary.*
- 2a. Seagrass survey for Johnson's seagrass is performed at the proposed site during the April 1 – August 31 growing season. *Go to 3.*
- 2b. No survey for Johnson's seagrass is performed at the proposed site during the growing season, or a survey is performed at the proposed site but is outside of the growing season. *Go to 4.*
- 3a. Johnson's seagrass is present at the proposed construction site. *Go to 5.*
- 3b. Johnson's seagrass is not present at the proposed construction site. *Go to 6.*
- 4a. The construction is in an area designated by the National Marine Fisheries Service - Protected Resources Division (NMFS-PRD) as **critical habitat<sup>2</sup>** for Johnson's seagrass. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001, **except that light-transmitting materials<sup>2</sup> (LTMs) shall comprise 100% of all pedestrian surfaces waterward of the mean low water (MLW) line.**
- 4b. The construction is not in an area designated by NMFS-PRD as critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001, **except that LTMs shall comprise at least 75% of all pedestrian surfaces waterward of the MLW line and a minimum 1-inch spacing shall be maintained between all wooden deckboards used waterward of the MLW line.**
- 5a. The construction is in an area designated by NMFS-PRD as critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001, **except that LTMs shall comprise at least 75% of all pedestrian surfaces waterward of the MLW line and a minimum 1-inch spacing shall be maintained between all wooden deckboards used waterward of the MLW line.**
- 5b. The construction is not in an area designated by NMFS-PRD as critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001, **except that all pedestrian surfaces directly over Johnson's seagrass areas shall be constructed of LTMs and a minimum**

***1-inch spacing shall be maintained between all wooden deckboards used waterward of the MLW line.***

- 6a.** The construction is in an area designated by NMFS-PRD as critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001, **except that a minimum 1-inch spacing shall be maintained between all wooden deckboards used waterward of the MLW line.**
- 6b.** The construction is not in an area designated by NMFS as critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. *Go to 7*
- 7a.** SAV other than Johnson's seagrass is present at the site. Use "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001.
- 7b.** No SAV present. *No construction conditions for SAV are necessary.*

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> This key is meant to complement but not supersede the "*Dock Construction Guidelines in Florida for Docks or Other Minor Structures Constructed in or over Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Marsh or Mangrove Habitat*" - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/National Marine Fisheries Service, August 2001. **Docks incorporating light-transmitting materials shall not exceed the dimensions recommended in the Guidelines.**

<sup>2</sup> Federal Register 65 FR 17786, April 5, 2000, Designation of critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass.

<sup>3</sup> Light-transmitting materials are made of various materials shaped in the form of grids, grates, lattices, etc., to allow the passage of light through the open spaces. **All light-transmitting materials used for dock construction in the known range of Johnson's seagrass shall have a minimum of forty-three (43) percent open space.**

**Grid Specifications and Suppliers**

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