



## What are Sea Grasses?

Seagrasses are marine flowering plants that depend on sunlight for energy. Their leaves, shoots, roots and flowers are completely underwater. Pollen and seeds are dispersed by water currents.

Two genera of seagrasses occur along the coast of California. Surfgrass (*Phyllospadix*) grows on rocky, surf-swept shores at or below the low tide mark. Eelgrass (*Zostera*), featured in this brochure, can form extensive meadows in quiet bays and off protected shores in muddy or sandy habitats. In the clear water of the Channel Islands, eelgrass can be found at depths from 15 to 60 feet.



*a ripe seed pod*

Sea grass beds have greatly declined in size and number world-wide.

Channelkeeper's Marine Restoration Program is working to ensure that

this valuable resource thrives at the Channel Islands, with the help of the following partners:



*a seedling*



## Help Protect Eelgrass Meadows

As boating around the Channel Islands increases, eelgrass beds that grow in popular anchorages are at risk. Dragging anchors and chains can uproot plants, creating 'holes' in beds that take years to recover. Please help protect this important habitat by anchoring outside of eelgrass beds.



*anchor damage*

Eelgrass occurs at different depths depending on location. You can avoid harming eelgrass by staying clear of these depths:

- Smugglers Cove** - eelgrass grows in 37'-50'
- Prisoners Harbor** - eelgrass grows in 15' to 22'
- Scorpion Anchorage** - eelgrass grows in 17'-25'
- Frenchy's Cove** - eelgrass grows in 20' to 25'



**Contact Us:**  
714 Bond Ave  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103  
Tel 805.563.3377  
[www.sbck.org](http://www.sbck.org)





# Eelgrass . . . a unique habitat at risk, worth preserving



Eelgrass meadows are essential fish habitat and provide nursery areas for many common and commercially important species, including surfperch, rockfish, kelp bass and rock crabs. These meadows support complex food webs, providing a source of food for worms, sea cucumbers, crabs and many other invertebrates and fish.

Eelgrass also helps to stabilize bottom sediment with its roots and maintain water clarity by trapping sediment with its leaves. Eelgrass meadows are very sensitive to disturbance by human activities such as pollution, dredging, and boat anchoring.



Following the 1982-83 El Nino event, all six eelgrass meadows around Anacapa Island and one

at Little Scorpion on Santa Cruz Island disappeared. They were mowed down by hungry sea urchins, whose populations exploded, then crashed. These meadows have never recovered.

## Restoration in Progress



Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is partnering with government agencies and the community to restore historical eelgrass meadows at the islands. Since 2001, we have worked to restore a small eelgrass bed at Frenchy's Cove, Anacapa Island, with help from the Channel Islands Research Program. Starting in 2004, we have partnered with the

University of California, Santa Barbara and The Nature Conservancy to establish a site at Little Scorpion Rock, Santa Cruz Island.



## Eelgrass Beds at the Islands

Areas that can support eelgrass are very limited - only 20 meadows have been discovered within Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary, of which only 16 remain today!



Some of the largest meadows occur at Smugglers Cove and Prisoner's Harbor on Santa Cruz Island, where the beds extend for more than a kilometer.

Eelgrass has never been found at San Miguel and Santa Barbara Islands.