

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Swim mask
 - Swim fins
 - Divers-down flag (required by law)
 - Snorkel
 - Small mesh bag
- » Displayed on vessel; must be at least 20 inches by 24 inches with a stiffener to keep the flag unfurled. Should only be displayed while snorkelers are in the water; display above the vessel’s highest point.
- » Tethered to diver; must be at least 12 inches by 12 inches; mandatory when using a mask and snorkel from the beach unless it is a marked swimming area.
- » You must make reasonable efforts to stay within 300 feet of a divers-down flag on open waters and within 100 feet of a flag within rivers, inlets, or navigation channels.
- Boat
- » Usually required to get to the best scalloping areas. In shallow water, it is possible to wade for scallops in the seagrass, or to collect them from a shallow-draft boat using a dip net or landing net, but these methods are not very productive. Most scallopers go by boat into water 4 to 10 feet deep where they anchor, put up their dive flag, and snorkel over the beds, collecting the scallops by hand.



RECIPES

FRIED SCALLOPS

Prepare an egg wash by beating 1 egg in 1/2 cup milk. Season wash to personal preference with salt and pepper. Dip scallop meats in egg wash, then coat with any prepared seafood breading or seasoned bread crumbs. Fry quickly (1–2 minutes or until golden brown) in hot, not smoking, grease (375°F). Drain on paper towels.

SIMPLY DELICIOUS SCALLOPS

Sauté 3 pounds Florida scallops in 2 tablespoons melted butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Stir until opaque, about 1 minute. Overcooking makes the texture rubbery. Remove scallops from skillet and set aside.

Wipe out skillet, then melt 1/2 cup butter over medium-low heat; add 2 cloves garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Stir for 3 minutes and add scallops.

Serve immediately over prepared pasta of your choice, such as angel hair. Garnish with fresh dill and season with freshly ground pepper.

Recipe courtesy of Fresh from Florida Seafood. For more seafood recipes, visit <http://www.fl-seafood.com>.

Photo Credits:
David Moynahan (cover), Bryan Fluech, Robert Baker, Keith Kolasa and UF/IFAS Communications.

For more information about scallops, scallop research, and recreational harvesting of the Florida bay scallop, please visit:

www.flseagrant.org

or contact
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For information about accommodations and scallop excursions in the area:



For information about saltwater fishing, license requirements, open seasons, and limits, contact:



Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
<http://myfwc.com>

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RECREATIONAL HARVESTING OF THE
FLORIDA BAY SCALLOP

HERNANDO COUNTY



The Florida bay scallop is a bivalve mollusk that lives in seagrass beds in relatively shallow water, usually 4 to 10 feet deep. At one time, scallops were reported from as far east as West Palm Beach and as far west as Pensacola. Today, populations can only be found in selected locations with expansive seagrass beds along Florida's west coast—principally in St. Joseph Bay, the Steinhatchee area of the Big Bend, and near the Crystal and Homosassa Rivers. Healthy seagrass meadows are essential for maintaining scallop populations, so remember to practice responsible boating, and avoid damaging the seagrass beds.

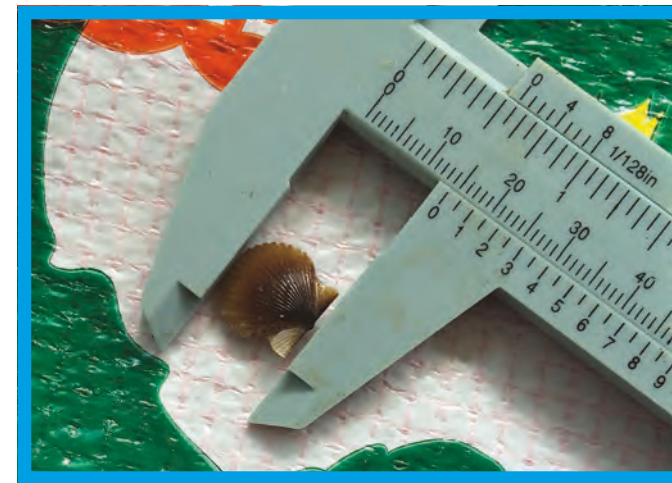
Scallops live about one year before either dying off naturally or being eaten by humans, crabs, octopuses, or a variety of shell-crushing fish. They spawn primarily in the fall. After about a two-week period as plankton, larvae develop a small shell and settle onto seagrass blades. They continue to grow while attached to the grass blades by a mass of silk-like filaments called a byssus. They later fall from the grass blades and become free swimmers. Unlike oysters and clams, scallops are active swimmers. They click their shells together, forcing expelled water to propel them rapidly. Scallops are simultaneous hermaphrodites, able to spawn as either males or females, and very fertile. A single scallop can produce more than one million eggs per spawn.

SCALLOPING FLORIDA'S ADVENTURE COAST

Hernando County is in the southern range of healthy, harvestable bay scallop populations. Expansive seagrass beds, an estimated 250,000 acres, flourish in the coastal waters along this county, providing a habitat in which the scallops thrive. These plentiful seagrass beds, coupled with clear waters and shallow depths, make Hernando County an ideal place to snorkel for scallops during the open season.

Populations of bay scallops, once abundant throughout Florida waters, have fluctuated throughout the years, and their range has decreased substantially. To help monitor their populations and maintain a sustainable breeding population, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) annually reviews the status of the scallop stock in state waters of the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

The boost in scallop populations may be partly a result of a restoration program started by researchers at the University of South Florida (USF), Florida Sea Grant, and FWC through its Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) testing the feasibility of aquaculture. Scallops are "synchronized spawners"—when one spawns, they all do. A number of adult, hatchery-reared scallops were placed in cages on bay bottoms where healthy populations previously existed. This approach appeared to increase the chance of successfully reproducing over natural scallops that are sparsely distributed. Recent studies by the University of Florida, USF, Mote Marine Laboratory, and FWRI have shown that adult populations may quickly rebound in some southwest Florida locations when late-stage, hatchery-reared larvae are introduced. Future genetic studies are expected to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of using larvae to increase scallop populations.



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

In Florida, commercial harvest of bay scallops is banned. In general, recreational scallopers between the ages of 16 and 65 must have a current Florida saltwater fishing license to collect scallops. There are some exceptions listed in the FWC "Florida Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations," which is available in bait shops, FWC offices, or on the FWC website (<http://myfwc.com>). All non-residents 16 and over are required to buy a license unless they are fishing (scallop) from a for-hire vessel (guide, charter, party boat) that has a valid vessel license.

Open season in Hernando County is July 1 through September 24 each year. (Always consult the FWC website for dates of current season.) Harvesting is allowed from the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal (in Bay County) to the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Aripeka). **The bag limit is 2 gallons of whole scallops (in the shell), or 1 pint of scallop meat per person per day.** In addition, **no more than 10 gallons of whole scallops or 1/2 gallon of scallop meat may be possessed aboard any vessel at any time.** You may harvest scallops only by hand or with a landing or dip net. **Starting in 2019, the direct transit of legally-harvested bay scallops through closed areas is allowed.**

See legal requirements about divers-down flags in equipment section.

COLLECTING

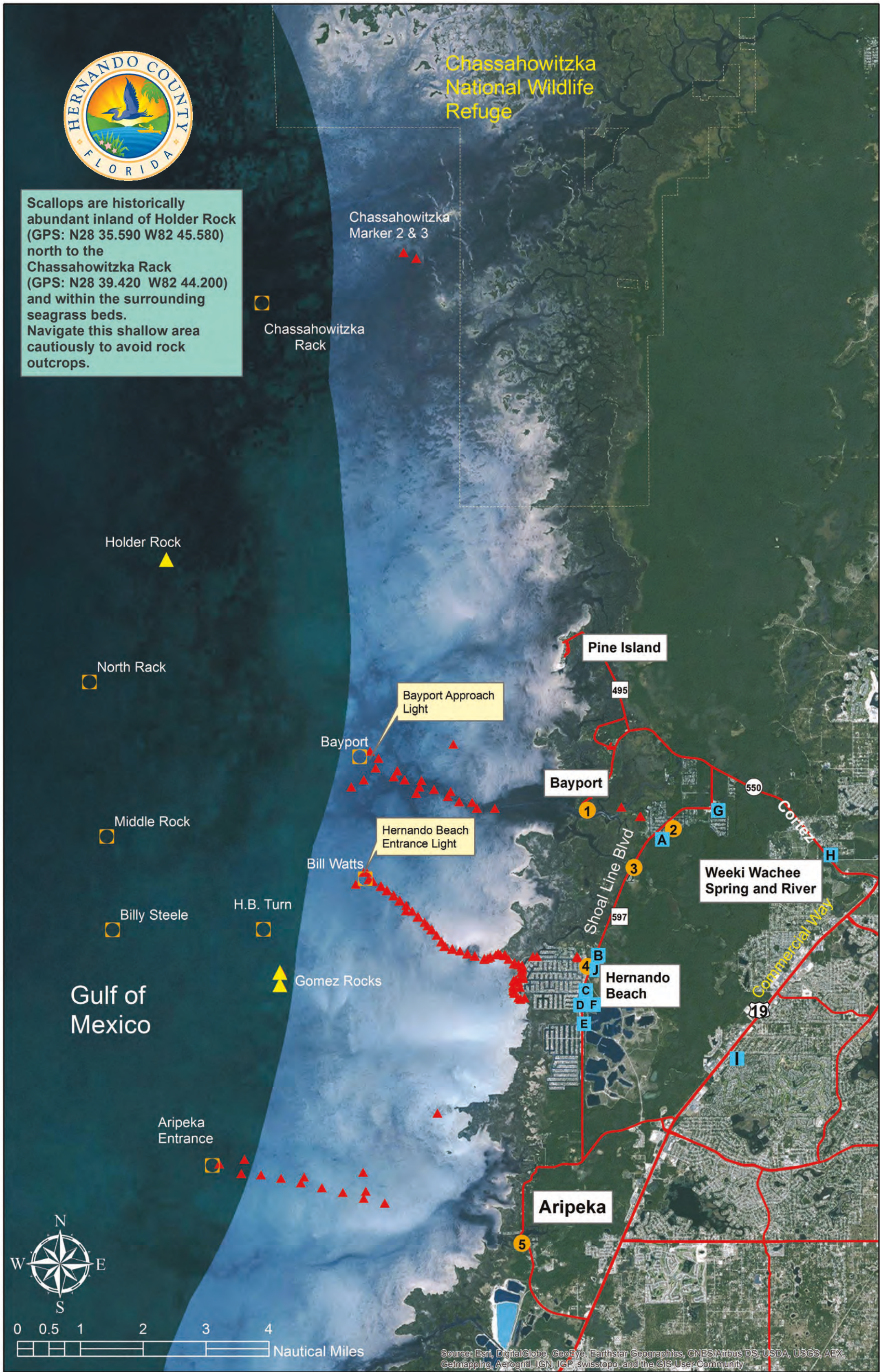
Scallops may be spotted on or near the bottom of seagrass beds, usually lying on their ventral shells. Often, they are easiest to find in borderline areas where the sand/mud bottom meets the edge of the grasses. Scallops have many neon-blue eyes and may try to swim away when they see you, but they do not swim fast or far. Keep collected scallops in a mesh bag, rather than in a pocket or in your swimsuit. They can pinch!

Though not required, collecting scallops that are at least 1.5 to two inches in size is seen as a best scalloping practice because the scallops are large enough to produce enough meat to make cleaning worthwhile. This also gives small summer scallops more time to grow and spawn in the fall.

CARE AND HANDLING

When brought to the boat, scallops should be immediately placed on ice in a cooler for the trip to shore unless you decide to clean the scallops while on the water. Scallops are quite sensitive to temperature and will quickly die if they are not kept cold. Even if kept cold, scallops will usually die shortly after being placed on ice, especially if fresh water gets into their shells. Placing them on ice, however, makes them easier to open, because the muscle holding the shells together relaxes. A scallop, clam, or oyster knife, or even a teaspoon, can be used to open the shells and cut the white muscle free, discarding the shells and unwanted soft parts. Although most Floridians only eat the white scallop muscle, in many other parts of the world the entire animal is eaten. If you do plan to eat the entire scallop, it should be cooked thoroughly because many open harvest areas for scallops are not classified for harvest of other shellfish species.





BOAT RAMP AND MARINA LOCATOR MAP FOR THE HERNANDO COUNTY AREA

FLORIDA'S ADVENTURE COAST.

This guide to recreational scalloping includes educational information about scallops and scalloping. The boat ramp and marina locator map show local water access points in the Hernando County area.

This map is not intended for navigational use. Channel markers may not be where shown. For navigation purposes, use only official nautical charts of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Hernando County area is featured in NOAA nautical chart 11409. Nautical charts are normally available for sale at marine and coastal businesses throughout Florida.

BOAT RAMPS

- 1 Bayport – 4140 Cortez Blvd, Bayport, FL 34607
- 2 Rogers Park – 7244 Shoal Line Blvd, Weeki Wachee, FL 34607
- 3 Jenkins Creek Park – 6401 Shoal Line Blvd, Spring Hill, FL 34607
- 4 Hernando Beach – 985 Calienta Dr, Hernando Beach, FL 34607
- 5 Norfleet Fish Camp – 221 Osowaw Blvd, Aripeka, FL 34607

MARINAS / BAIT AND TACKLE SHOPS

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | Weeki Wachee Marina
7154 Shoal Line Blvd, Weeki Wachee, FL 34607 |
| B | Blue Pelican Marina
5000 Calienta St, Hernando Beach, FL 34607 |
| C | Sterling Marina/Hernando Beach Bait & Tackle Shop
4211 Shoal Line Blvd, Hernando Beach, FL 34607 |
| D | Hernando Beach Yacht Club
4163 Shoal Line Blvd, Hernando Beach, FL 34607 |
| E | Hernando Beach Marina
4139 Shoal Line Blvd, Hernando Beach, FL 34607 |
| F | Nature Coast Marina
4169 Shoal Line Blvd, Hernando Beach, FL 34607 |
| G | Gulf Coast Marina
7412 Shoal Line Blvd, Weeki Wachee, FL 34607 |
| H | Dixie Lee Bait Shop
6408 Evanston St, Weeki Wachee, FL 34613 |
| I | Precision Tackle
3284 Commercial Way, Spring Hill, FL 34606 |
| J | Bait and Tackle of Hernando Beach
4317 Calienta St, Hernando Beach, FL 34607 |

MAP LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| 1 | Boat ramps | 100 | State/county route |
| A | Marinas/bait & tackle shops | — | Roads |
| ▲ | Channel markers | 19 | U.S. Highway |
| ▲ | Structure | ○ | Lighted marker |

RESEARCHERS FROM FWC NEED YOUR HELP

Once you're done scalloping for the day, complete an online survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/bayscallops> or scan the image below with a QR scanner app. Harvesters can indicate where they harvest scallops, how many they collect, and how long it takes to harvest them.

Cleaning Your Shells

Be courteous of other scallopers and move your boat away from the scalloping areas first, then anchor. It's no fun scalloping where others are cleaning their catch.

When done cleaning scallops, do not discard shells in rivers, channels, springs, or in the water at boat ramps or marinas. Shells could fill these areas, incurring costs to remove the shells and causing negative impacts on swimmers, wildlife, and navigation. Discard scallop shells out in open Gulf waters, or store shells in a bag and discard at home.



Scan this QR code to take the survey!