

ANCHOR DAMAGE



About Anchor Damage

The Florida Reef Tract lies in some of the most highly traversed waters in the world. In a study conducted in the Florida Keys, 57 percent of shallow water reef sites surveyed had signs of damage from recreational boating and anchor drops. Anchors from boats can cause considerable damage to coral reefs, including breakage, fragmentation and direct injury to the reef ecosystem. Additionally, anchors and chains from commercial shipping, fishing and recreational vessels can break or dislodge corals, sponges and sea fans, resulting in immediate and long-term damage to large areas of the coral reef.

Since some species of coral grow only 1 centimeter per year, it can take many years to recover from an anchoring incident. Anchoring also causes immediate and extensive damage on reef-associated habitats such as seagrass beds, which are important nursery and juvenile habitats for many species.



Left: Anchor resting on a Florida reef. Right: Proper anchoring technique Photo: Florida DEP

FAST FACTS

Tips to prevent anchor damage:

- » Avoid anchoring on coral reefs; use mooring buoys instead.
- » Mooring buoys are located off the coasts of Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Martin counties.
- » Anchor in the sand beyond the edge of the reef or in a sand patch.
- » Use the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Coral Reef Conservation Program map on the [ESRI ArcGIS mobile app](#) to find a sandy spot for anchoring.
- » Carry enough chain and line for the depth in which you plan to anchor.
- » Motor toward the anchor and retrieve it by pulling up vertically.



Montastraea cavernosa coral damage from anchor chain in Florida. Photo: Dave Gilliam

**Report anchor damage to Southeast Florida Action Network (SEAFAN)
[online](#) or call 866-770-7335.**



SEAFAN is a reporting and response system designed to improve the protection and management of Southeast Florida's coral reefs by enhancing marine debris clean-up efforts, increasing response to vessel groundings and anchor damage, and providing early detection of potentially harmful biological disturbances.