

Mark your calendars...

- February 2: noon to 4 pm: Water Education Festival at MOSH (Jacksonville). FREE admission!
- February 15-March 22: Coastal Master Naturalist Course —Volusia County. See www.masternaturalist.org to register or for more information
- More on back page!

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Getting caught up...

Sorry this newsletter is a little delayed in getting out, but I wanted to make sure I had all the details sorted out for the new adult day camp program (see below). Also, the delay lets me brag about seeing a brand new baby manatee at Blue Spring this morning (Feb 4)—it was born yesterday and is the smallest manatee I've ever seen. Very cool! For those who may not be aware, Blue Spring has manatee webcams online now—you can view live streaming during winter months at www.savethemanatee.org/savethemanateecam.html. One nice thing about this website is that it also posts Wayne Hartley's updates from the morning manatee counts (he's a retired ranger from Blue Spring and is their manatee expert). We're wrapping up the details on our 4th grade right whale curriculum, so local teachers can look forward to more information about that shortly (it's currently being reviewed by NOAA education folks). Here's to a productive 2013!

M. P. McGuire

Maia McGuire, PhD
Marine Extension Agent

BRAND NEW adult class scheduled for April

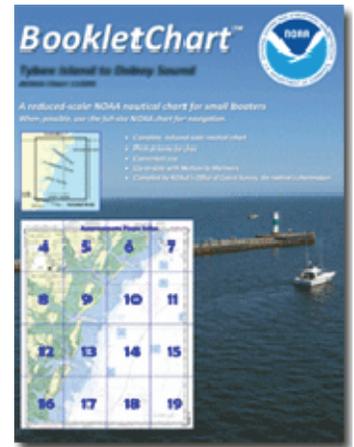
Fishing regulations. Marine protected areas. Beach nourishment. Sea level rise. These are all topics that can inspire fiery debates. Yet they are also topics that many people have a limited understanding about. You can learn more about these and other coastal issues by participating in the newest version of the popular adult day camp series, *Exploring our Environment—Coastal Policy and You and Me*. The class will be taught from April 8—12, 2013 at the GTMNERR Marineland classroom. The class runs from 9am to 4pm each day. For more information or to register, go to <http://eoe3april2013.eventbrite.com>.



Free maps available from NOAA

The NOAA BookletChart™ is a product that anyone can print for free. BookletCharts are made to help recreational boaters locate themselves on the water.

The BookletChart is reduced in scale and divided into pages for convenience, but otherwise contains all the information of the full-scale nautical chart. Bar scales are also reduced in scale, but are accurate when used to measure distances in a BookletChart. Excerpts from the United States Coast Pilot are included. Most chart notes are consolidated on a single page for easy reference. Emergency information for the charted area is printed on the back cover.



NOTE: BookletCharts are being updated every week with Notices to Mariners. Some errors are known to exist, e.g. the "Approximate Page Index" might not match the chart inside.

BookletCharts can be found online at

<http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/staff/BookletChart.html>

Tips for Avoiding Fake Grouper

Grouper is one of Florida's most valuable commercial fisheries. In 2011 over 6.9 million pounds were landed in the state with an estimated dockside value of over \$19 million. However, because of its economic value, popularity among consumers, and limited supply, grouper has been the target of species substitution and mislabeling by some wholesalers, restaurants, and retailers in recent years. Often the substituted product is a lesser-valued fish imported from other countries. Species substitution and mislabeling is illegal! While the perpetrators who sell the product might generate economic gains in the short-run, the fraudulent act can have long-term negative consequences for the industry as well as consumers.



Photo credit: Renee Suen/Flickr

What's in a name? The US Food and Drug Administration is the federal agency responsible for regulating seafood labeling. Over fifty species of fish in the seabass family worldwide are legally allowed to be called "grouper" in the US marketplace. However, the term "Florida grouper" can only legally be used to refer to grouper species harvested from Florida waters. These fish may carry the "Fresh from Florida" logo/label.

As seafood consumer, it is important to "know your seafood". There are several things you can do to ensure you are getting the grouper you paid for and expect.

Tips for Avoiding Fake Grouper (cont.)

Deal with merchants that you trust. Get to know your fish retailers and talk with them about what kind of grouper they have and where it is harvested. Any respectable business should be able to answer these questions. If still in doubt, ask to see the fish before purchasing it.

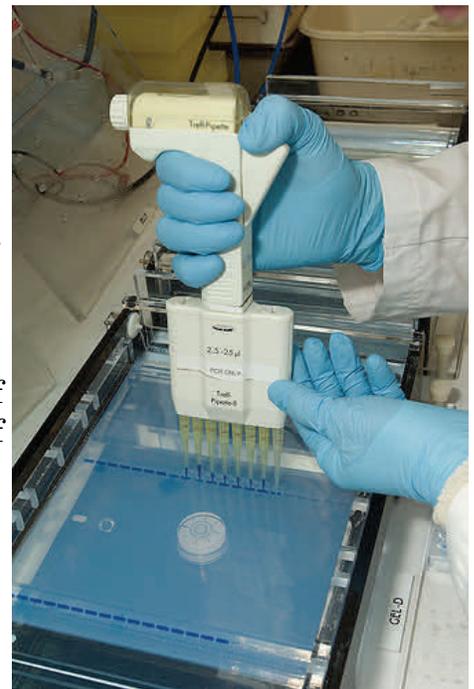
Know the appearance and texture of grouper. While individual species have unique identifiable characteristics, grouper is commonly described as a lean, white-flesh fish with a taste and texture, which is popular and distinct from most common white-flesh fish. Grouper fillets are usually thick with a firm texture. When you order grouper fried, it makes it harder to distinguish it from other species so take this into consideration. Also consider the size of the grouper you get. Because of U.S. regulations, domestic grouper has to be a minimum size to harvest. If you order grouper and the whole fillet fits on your plate, that is probably a strong indicator that its either not grouper or perhaps a grouper imported from another country, where size limits are less restrictive.

Is the price right? Buyers should be wary of grouper prices that are suspiciously low. Because the supply of domestic grouper is limited, the price is generally around \$11 to \$13 per pound wholesale fillet value, and the retail value -- the price paid by consumers -- will be even higher. Prices that are considerably lower likely mean that the fish is not grouper, but instead is a substitute species of lesser value, such as basa or Asian swai. When dining out, the price you pay for grouper will depend on the type of restaurant, and whether you get a sandwich or an entrée. Entrée prices can vary from \$14-\$27 and sandwiches can range from \$8-10 at a low-end restaurant to \$13-16 at a high-end restaurant.

Report Fraudulent Acts. If you suspect the grouper you are purchasing isn't really grouper, report it! Remember, species substitution and mislabeling is against the law! To learn more about species substitution and how to report possible violations visit: <http://www.florida-agriculture.com/consumers/fnr/seafoodlabels/>

Until recently, in order to determine whether a fish sample was really the type of fish being marketed, a sample had to be sent away for genetic testing. This takes several weeks and costs roughly \$200 per sample. Researchers from the University of South Florida, with funding from the University of Florida's Sea Grant Program (www.flseagrant.org), have now developed a hand-held machine that can test the DNA of fish tissue samples in a matter of minutes (although the processing of the sample takes about an hour). This allows the user to tell if a fish sample (frozen, uncooked or cooked) is grouper or not. Called the QPyre Handheld Sensor, the machine costs \$2,500, so this is not something for personal use. However, it could be used by regulators, wholesalers and/or restaurants to verify the type of fish being marketed as grouper.

Some information in this article was taken from the fact sheet, "Tips for avoiding fake grouper," by Bryan Fluech, Lisa Krinsky and Steven Theberge (Florida Sea Grant Extension).



Preparing samples for DNA testing.
Photo credit: USDA

We're now on Facebook—check out [facebook.com/NEFLSeaGrant](https://www.facebook.com/NEFLSeaGrant) and “like” it to keep informed about coastal topics in the region. Don't have a Facebook account? That's OK—you can view the page without one :)



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More “Mark your calendars”

- February 22: “Caught in the Same Net; the Ocean and Us” presentation by author Carl Safina, President Blue Ocean Institute. 7pm at UF Whitney Lab’s Lohman Auditorium. Admission is \$10. Books will be available for signing by the author. For more information and to purchase tickets in advance (recommended) see www.whitney.ufl.edu or call 904-461-4000.
- February 22-23: 4th annual Environmental Expo, beach cleanup and Osceola Elementary 5K Turtle Trot (St Augustine Beach). See www.turtletrt.com for more information.
- March 2-8: National Invasive Species Awareness Week. Look for events on the calendar at www.floridainvasives.org.
- March 2: Great Air Potato Roundup. Various sites in the northeast Florida coastal region. See calendar at www.floridainvasives.org or contact Emily Montgomery at Emily.Montgomery@dep.state.fl.us for more information.
- March 9: League of Environmental Educators in Florida annual mini-conference (Ruskin, FL). See <http://leef-florida.org> for more information and to register.
- April 15—May 10: Coastal Systems Master Naturalist Program—Volusia Co. See www.masternaturalist.org to register or for more information
- April 8-12: Exploring our Environment—Coastal Policy and You and Me. See page 1.
- April 18-21: Florida Birding and Photo Fest, St Augustine area. See <http://floridasbirdingandphotofest.com/> for more information.
- April 20: 10 am—4 pm—Earth Day and Ecology Fair at the Jacksonville Landing. Free admission. See earthdayjax.com for more information.
- April 20-21: Washington Oaks State Park Earth Day (Flagler County). 10 am—4 pm each day. Admission is \$10/vehicle (up to 8 people).

Please check the calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu> for other environmental education programs around the state.

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