

Seagrass Removal Status Report Bahia Bay 2018

Removal of grass from the canal has been an ongoing challenge for Bahia Bay Property Owners as well as those in other canal front subdivisions up and down the Intercostal Waterway. The 2018 BBPOA committee included Larry Reed, Tom Berkenkotter and Driscoll Otto.

Here is our current situation.

In the past, we have been paying to have the grass removed by manual labor, and hauled off on trailers. Budget for 2018 was \$4,000 for the year, which is in line with years past annual cost for removal. Various methods have been used, all of them involving manual labor and trailers.

BBPOA contracted with Bruce Spears to remove grass for one year for a total of \$4,000, which included removing the grass several times, as needed, during the 2018 year (the grass is only an issue from April thru November, and needs to be cleaned about every 4-6 weeks during that period). But due to personal issues, Bruce was not able to fulfil the contract. We obtained several bids for removing the grass, which ranged from \$2500 to \$4500 per job, and the methods the bidders proposed would require removal of the entire fence from the canal front on every job. At this rate, the annual cost could be in the range of \$15-\$20,000.

Because of the increasing costs for removal by trailer, we began looking at other methods with the idea of moving the grass back to the ICW instead of hauling it away on trailers. Apparently, we are not the only ones reaching the same conclusion. All of our neighbors along the ICW are now, by one method or another, trying to remove the grass by moving it back to the ICW instead of hauling it off.

We tried using a debris boom to drag the grass back out onto the flats. After three attempts we abandoned this method. Debris booms are designed to prevent floating debris from entering areas where it is not wanted. The devices work well for that purpose, but not for moving it from one place to another.

One of our neighbors in Palm Harbor (John Haechten) designed a rig to mount on front of his boat which would gather up the grass and push it back out of the canals and deposit it on the flats where it came from. Roger Horan introduced us to John and we borrowed his rig and tried it using Tom Berkenkotter boat with some success.

Using the same concept, we built on of these rigs, and fit it to my boat. It worked fairly well, but could use some improvement and it requires a half day for two men to remove a significant amount of the grass. Nevertheless, we were able to clear out the grass a couple of times before the north winds came and eliminated the problem for another few months.

Worth noting that the coast guard reportedly has no issue with this procedure as long as we do not dump other floating trash in the ICW which is not naturally occurring there. We were careful to make sure that didn't happen.

We are still looking for ideas, and help from anyone who would like to volunteer. And we want to make it very clear that it is not our intention to become the grass removal guys. We are still in the market for a contractor to perform these duties. So, we recommend continuing to include money in our budget for grass removal. The rig we are using is easy to make, and we are thinking that it would be a good business for someone with a boat and a helper with a strong back. Plenty of opportunities in this area for an energetic young person, and I can help in a number of ways if any of you know someone who might be interested.

Also want to thank Norm Charlton for moral support and providing liquid refreshment to our hard working crew as we journeyed past him to and from the ICW.

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