## RAI 3-4 CR Seagrass Technical Advisory Committee Final Report

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#### **CRYSTAL RIVER ENERGY COMPLEX** SANCE REVE Dafte.

The Florida Power Corporation's (FPC) Crystal River Energy Complex is located on the west coast, approximately 1.5 miles from the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 2.5 miles north of the site are the mouths of the Withlacoochee River and the Cross Florida Barge Canal.

NPDES Permit No. FL0000159 currently authorizes the discharge of industrial wastewater from Units 1, 2 and 3. Unit 1 began commercial operation in October 1966, Unit 2 in November 1969. On December 31, 1974, EPA issued an NPDES permit for the operation of Units 1, 2 and 3 which required offstream cooling subject to consideration of a variance and alternative thermal limits under Section 316 of the Clean Water Act. Subsequently, Unit 3 began commercial operation in March **1977.**

The thermal component of the discharge from the facility was subject to the water quality standards specified in Section 17-3.050 FAC. The rule required that thermal discharges "shall not increase the temperature of the receiving body of water (RBW) so as to cause substantial damage or harm to the aquatic life or vegetation therein or interfere with the beneficial uses assigned to the RBW". During renewal of the NPDES (and state Industrial Wastewater) permit in 1979, and in accordance with Section 316 and Section 17-3, EPA and the FDEP required post-operational biological and thermal studies in order to make a determination of the need for offstream cooling, reduced thermal discharge and/or reduced intake flow. Following the completion of the 316 (a) and (b) studies in 1984, the EPA and the FDEP issued a public notice of determination that 'substantial damage" had occurred in approximately 1100 acres of Crystal Bay, primarily due to the thermal discharge from the facility. Subsequently, in accordance with Section 17-3.05(1)(a)(3), FAC, the agencies, imposed permit limitations on the thermal component of the discharge consistent with off-stream cooling. The EPA and FDEP agreed that offstream cooling would subsequently satisfy the requirements of the Florida Water Quality Standards and Sections 316 (a) and (b) of the Act. FPC disagreed with the conclusions made from the study. Specifically, FPC questioned if seagrass was ever actually present in the area, the extent of the area identified as affected and if the thermal discharge from the site resulted in substantial damage in the area to plants and animals. In February 1987, FPC initially proposed to extend the discharge canal into deeper water as an alternative to off-stream cooling towers. Following rejection of the initial proposal, FPC offered a second proposal in 1988 which included the construction of helper cooling towers.

In 1989, following several years of testimony, engineering studies and negotiations, the EPA issued an NPDES (and state Industrial Wastewater) permit with the following requirements: installation of flow reduction equipment to reduce flow through the plant by 15 percent during the months of November through April; construction and operation of a multi-species mariculture center to mitigate for intake impacts to aquatic fisheries; and construction and operation of helper cooling towers to mitigate for thermal impacts to water quality, macrophytes and seagrasses. The multi-species mariculture center was operational October 1991 and flow reduction was implemented May 1992. The helper cooling towers were designed and constructed to ensure that a maximum discharge temperature from the Crystal River site point of discharge (POD) of  $97.0^{\circ}$  F. Following implementation of cooling tower operation in 1993, the permit required that seagrass monitoring be conducted to quantify seagrass presence and recovery within the zone of discharge of the facility and the establishment of a Seagrass Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to review the report and make recommendations regarding future activities at the site.

The results of the seagrass monitoring project and recommendations of members of the Seagrass TAC are included in this report.

#### SEAGEASS MONITORING PROJECT SUMMARY **Simple Second**

Following commencement of helper cooling tower operation, NPDES Permit FL0000159 required the following:

### Seagrass Monitoring

Evaluation of seagrass colonization in the zone of discharge after a period of two years to determine recruitment rates and zones. A baseline distribution survey using aerial photography and field surveys, including one survey no later than two years following the initial survey. If natural colonization is determined to be proceeding at an acceptable rate, no further activity will be required.

### Seagrass Technical Advisory Committee

The establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee to review the seagrass monitoring reports and offer suggestions regarding future activities at the site.

### Sprig Plantine

If natural colonization is unsatisfactory, sprig planting will be conducted during the third year of tower operation and will consist of replicated, multi-species plots in a cross section of discharge habitats.

### Seagrass planting

If it is determined that seagrass planting is feasible and necessary, seagrass will be planted in the area within the zone of discharge during years 5 through 9 following tower operation, at a rate of ten (10) acres per year.

## **SEAGRASS MONITORING RESULTS.**

Biological studies were conducted by Mote Marine Laboratory for three years following implementation of the helper cooling towers at the Crystal River Energy Complex. The study was conducted to quantify seagrass presence and recovery within a two mile radius of the site point of discharge (POD) into the Gulf of Mexico.

Spatial as well as temporal patterns in the distribution of seagrasses and rhizophytic algae occurred at transacts and seagrass monitoring bed locations. Patterns depicted a system of bed recruitment and expansion in submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) cover and condition over the three year monitoring period. Six new beds appeared in barren areas, and of those, three persisted into 1995. More than half of the intensely monitored beds had net increases in perimeter and 8 of 15 beds also increased with respect to cover from 1993 to 1994. Biomass was lower and productivity was higher in 1995, than in 1994, possibly a result of the heavy storms and rains which occurred in 1995. Overall, changes along the transact and bed locations within the 2 mile zone of discharge were mirrored by changes at more distant sites.

## **WEIGHT AT A TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

A Seagrass Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) which consisted of representatives from state and federal environmental agencies and experts in the field of seagrass dynamics convened to review the Crystal River seagrass monitoring reports and make recommendations regarding future activities at the site.

Participants are as follows:

Mr. Gary Serviss, Senior Scientist, CCI Environmental Services, Inc.

Dr. Clinton Dawes, University Distinguished Research Professor, Department of Biology, University of South Florida.

Dr. Michael Durako, Senior Research Scientist, Florida Marine Research Institute, Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Mr. Phillip Murphy, Acting Chief, Ecological Support Branch, U. **S.** Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. David Bruzek, Manager, Crystal River Mariculture Center, Florida Power Corporation.

Ms. Manitia Moultrie, Chair, Seagrass TAC, Environmental Specialist, Florida Power Corporation.

SEAGRASS TAC MEETINGS r al-le

The initial meeting of the Seagrass TAC was held on February 21, 1996 at the Florida Power Corporation, General Office Complex.

Seagrass TAC members discussed the history of the Crystal River site and the results of the Seagrass Monitoring Project conducted in 1994 and 1995. The following issues were discussed:

- **o** Expansion of Seagrass Beds
- **o** Percent Cover
- **o** Total Seagrass Biomass
- **o** Shoot Density
- **o** Productivity

Overall, several seagrass beds had net increases in perimeter and cover from 1993 to 1994, with some decrease in cover in **1995.** Biomass was lower and productivity was higher in 1995 than in 1994. TAC members agreed that there may be an infinite array of causes for the increase in productivity and decrease in biomass within the seagrass communities. While the inclination of the TAC was to question if the helper cooling towers have had an impact on seagrass recovery, the focus of the committee was to evaluate seagrass recovery rates within a two mile radius of the site POD and determine if 'acceptable" recolonization has occurred. The lack of barren controls which are representative of the study area, the lack of historical data and the regional affects on productivity and biomass were discussed.

The second meeting of the Seagrass **TAC** was held on March 29, 1996 at the Crystal River Mariculture Center. A helicopter tour of Crystal River Units **1,** 2 and 3 and the study area was conducted prior to the meeting.

A summary of the 316 studies which was conducted from June 1983 to August 1984 was provided to the **TAC.** The monitoring program was conducted to evaluate the effects of plant operations on the area within the zone of discharge from the Crystal River site.

The impact of light intensity, turbidity, salinity variation and suspended load on seagrass colonization was evaluated. The TAC suggested that these factors are a significant influence on seagrass colonization and could be more critical than the temperature factor.

**TAC** members indicated that they could not determine if adequate seagrass colonization has occurred within the zone of discharge in comparison to regional seagrass colonization rates. There are insufficient areas within the region which are actually representative of the zone of discharge due to the location of the spoil dikes and influences offsite from the Withlacoochee River, Cross Florida Barge Canal and Homosassa Springs.

**TAC** members indicated that based on available data, there are too many factors to consider which may have a dramatic impact on seagrass colonization. The historical data and geography of the area suggest that while temperature cannot be ruled out as an impact to seagrass colonization, the primary factor affecting seagrass recolonization may not be temperature since seagrass recolonization has not been dramatic since implementation of the helper cooling towers. Impacts which need to be considered which were not a part of this study include turbidity, light intensity and salinity variations. **TAC** members agreed that the isolation of these factors may not be appropriate for FPC to evaluate since FPC performed the necessary mitigation and should not be required to continue to evaluate the area to isolate which factor is responsible for past impacts to the seagrass community.

The **TAC** also discussed the cost and benefits of sprig planting and subsequent monitoring to evaluate physical data, seagrass survival rates and regrowth. As a result of this discussion, the **TAC** agreed that sprig planting may be futile if factors such as turbidity and light intensity are as limiting as they appear to be.

Following the final meeting, each **TAC** member was asked to provide an official comment letter to address the following issues:

- **o** Interpretation of the historical ecological data regarding impact to seagrass communities within the zone of discharge of the Crystal River POD.
- **<sup>o</sup>**Expected seagrass recolonization rates based on current research, existing data and regional impacts.
- **o** The requirement to conduct sprig planting, if natural colonization is unsatisfactory and conduct subsequent monitoring to evaluate seagrass survival rates,

Comments from the **TAC** members are provided in the following section.



#### **Dr. Clinton Dawns, USF** and Martin Company SAL PA

From the historical data available, it appears that seagrass beds were present in the POD region but were lost due to the discharge/construction activities. By 1983-84 there were only minimal grass patches and this apparently has remained at the same level based on the 1993-95 study. The patchy nature of seagrass communities surrounding the Crystal River Plant indicates that there are wide fluctuations in seagrass development. Thus one cannot anticipate development of extensive beds at any time in the near future but might expect some contraction.

The colonization rate of the beds appears to be static based on the limited data from the 1993-95 study. However, without control sites outside the impacted region, it is difficult to know just how different expansion or contraction rates are. Thus, a small study comparing colonization rates within and outside the POD/impacted sites might be an alternative to planting. The Syringodium beds to the south of the channels might serve as controls. If this is done, continuous recordings of temperature and salinity are needed.

My experience suggests that the impacted area (POD, region of channels) will not change much in the next 10 to 15 years and that the seagrass communities are in a steady state at this time. The one problem, as pointed out, is the high rates of blade growth determined in 1996, without expansion. This suggests a reaction to high temperatures, low light and a future contraction of the beds.

A general seagrass planting should not be attempted unless there is evidence that the sprigs would survive in the POD and impacted region. If sprig planting is decided on, a number of small pilot, or test plantings should first be tried (2 year study) over the zones (A through D) listed in the 1983-84 study (Fig. 6.1-7). Such a study should include continuous monitoring of temperature and salinity data.

Clinton **J.** Dawes Distinguished Research Professor University of South Florida



Historical data relative to the composition, density and distribution of seagrasses within the zone of discharge of the Crystal River POD is limited. A single map from the 1975 Florida Power Corporation (FPC) report documents the distribution and standing crop of submerged aquatic vegetation **(SAV).** The methods used to prepare the map, the intensity of the survey effort and the antecedent weather conditions are not known. It is also not known if this map accurately reflects the historic distribution and density of SAV in the zone of discharge.

Consideration must be given to the limited historic distribution data. The historic SAY map essentially represents a snapshot in time and actual historic **SAV** coverage may vary substantially from that shown on the map.

Based on the above-mentioned limitation, the actual impact to seagrass communities in the zone of discharge is difficult to quantify. Although **SAV** cover is substantially less than in the 1975 map, it appears that a large percent of the zone of discharge area was barren or sparsely vegetated in 1975.

Review of the water quality section of the 316 Study provides insight into the dynamics of the zone of discharge. The water quality data indicates that this area is probably marginal at supporting seagrasses. The photometry data indicate that a significant percentage of incident light is absorbed before reaching the substrate over much of the zone of discharge. Unconsolidated sediments were documented to resuspend under windy conditions and result in increased turbidity. The area was also documented to be a highly depositional environment.

The 316 Study documented the spatial temperature variation from the POD. Isotherms were provided for the zone of discharge for various tidal and seasonal combinations. These figures provide information relative to the potential impact area of SAV which could be attributed to elevated temperature levels.

The two mile zone of discharge radius for seagrass community impacts due to elevated temperatures appears conservative (i.e., larger than the temperature data would indicate). Although the impact of high water temperature on seagrass communities has been well documented, the temperature changes documented in the 316 Study would not be expected, in and of themselves, to result in the loss of seagrasses within the entire area. It appears that other factors may also have contributed to the reduced coverage of SAV in the zone of discharge. Again, it is important to note these results are based upon a limited historical data base relative to **SAV** coverage.

Seagrass colonization rates at this location are difficult to estimate. As previously discussed, there is limited historical data on actual seagrass coverage. This combined with the depositional nature of the area, wind suspension of unconsolidated material and the low transparency of the water provide variables to consider in predicting colonization rates.

Based upon the temperature modeling before and after helper cooling tower usage, recolonization of seagrasses would be expected within a portion of the zone of discharge. This predicted recolonization, however, assumes that the higher temperatures were the sole or primary cause of seagrass loss in some areas and that the reduction of temperature in and of itself would allow the area to recolonize. This does not appear to be a reasonable assumption based upon the nature of the area.

Drawing conclusions from the Seagrass Monitoring Report data is exacerbated by several factors. Relative to the study design, it generally appears appropriate for answering the questions discussed. The study could, however, have benefited from water quality data at varying distances from the POD. This is especially true because of the climatic events which occurred in 1995. The impact of these climatical events upon seagrass recolonization is difficult to assess in the absence of some abiotic water quality parameters.

Short of phenomenal natural recolonization, it was probably optimistic to expect two years of monitoring to provide sufficient data on recolonization trends; Typically, monitoring would be necessary over several years to allow for natural fluctuations in recolonization rates and still reveal the appropriate trends. This is especially true when the marginal water quality of the area is considered.

The results of the monitoring in 1994 were encouraging since a few new beds were observed to colonize the area near the POD. Unfortunately, the monitoring in 1995 confused the trends, with seagrasses disappearing from 1994 locations and beds appearing in new locations. The climatic events of 1995 may well have contributed to the variable recolonization of seagrasses. The 316 Study documented the effect of storms on turbidity levels and several storms occurred in 1995.

The results of the study do not allow for a finding that recolonization is proceeding at acceptable rates nor are the results such that one would conclude that recolonization is occurring at unacceptable rates. The limited time frame of data collection combined with the regional climatic events in 1995 does not provide a clear picture of recolonization trends.

The following recommendations are provided:

- **\*** Continue monitoring the recolonization of seagrasses, as done in 1994 and 1.995, until the trend data stabilizes. Once stabilized, the data can be reviewed for acceptable rates of recolonization. Monitoring could be done every other year to provide information on long-term trends.
- **\*** Add the collection of key abiotic parameters (e.g., salinity, transparency, temperature, turbidity) to the monitoring program. Data collection points should extend outward from the POD for approximately three miles. The frequency of water quality monitoring should be sufficient to characterize the various basins.
- Sprig planting is not recommended at this time. Before expending funds to study the planting of seagrasses, the issue of natural recolonization rates should be resolved. The water quality data may also be helpful in determining which basins are likely to be compatible with seagrass reestablishment. Failure of areas to naturally recolonize likely indicates that conditions are not suitable for seagrass establishment and sprig planting would be unsuccessful.

Gary M. Serviss Senior Scientist CCI Environmental Services, Inc.

#### 금리 일본 Dr. Michael Durako, FDEP

A primary limitation to the interpretation of the historical data, is the lack of a reliable, preoperational seagrass distribution map, Based on the findings of the 316(a) studies which were undertaken after Unit 3 was operational, approximately 3,000 acres adjacent to the POD were biologically adversely affected by POD discharge and 1,100 acres were barren of seagrasses. The 316(a) studies concluded this impact was primarily due to thermal effects. Installation of helper cooling towers, which became operational on June 15, 1993, was intended to return the discharge area to the approximate thermal levels in existence prior to the operation of Unit 3. A three-year monitoring report on the seagrass communities adjacent to and in the area contiguous to the POD suggests that the Crystal River site is dynamic, with increases and decreases in seagrass biomass and coverage being observed throughout the study area over the three-year study period. This study did not demonstrate any persistent seagrass recovery within the zone nearest to the POD. The absence of temperature, salinity or light-availability data precludes any assessment as to the reasons why seagrasses have not recolonized the interior **1,100** acre zone. Individual patches of seagrasses were observed to colonize the area, but most disappeared within a year. The lack of suitable control sites also limits the interpretation of the monitoring data with respect to natural, regional seagrass recolonization rate.

The lack of spatial water temperature data in the study area before and after the installation of the helper cooling towers is most surprising (and disturbing). Water temperature reduction was the reason for the helper cooling tower installation. Merely measuring temperatures at the POD does not provide sufficient information regarding the effective spatial scope of the reduced temperatures.

Statements made in both the seagrass monitoring report and in the presentation of the report's findings by Mote Marine Lab scientists, coupled with my observations during the aerial overflight of the sight suggest that factors (e.g., turbidity, salinity, stochastic meteorological events) other than temperature may also be affecting potential recolonization of the site by seagrasses. Without reliable data on light availability, salinity variation, and disturbance regimes, it is impossible to ascertain what factors are restricting recolonization in the study.

Based on the information provided and discussions with the other TAC members, I would not recornrend attempting any significant transplanting efforts until more information regarding the physical attributes of the near-POD area have been gathered, specifically turbidity and light availability data.

Michael **J.** Durako, Ph.D. Senior Research Scientist Florida Marine Research Institute



This letter is in response to our conversations over the past three months as they relate to the request for my participation on the Seagrass Technical Advisory Committee for the Crystal River Plant. I regret that our participation was severely hampered by the budgetary crisis and associated travel restraints which our office incurred precisely during the period that the TAC was convened. This likewise, coincided with the retirement of Mr. Delbert Hicks who had served for years as the EPA representative for biological matters regarding the Crystal River Power Plant. With his departure, the institutional knowledge of our staff relative to the Crystal River Plant also went out the door. Consequently, I have been playing catch-up without too much success. Thanks to you for supplying me with the TAC meeting minutes and other associated literature. They are my only connection to the questions and TAC discussion relative to the Seagrass Study. Accordingly, with these qualifiers, I offer the following limited comments.

As we discussed several weeks ago via telephone, the seagrass study by Mote Marine Lab is, at best, inconclusive regarding regeneration of seagrasses within the thermal plume area. I think it would be stretching any facts to suggest that recolonization is occurring. It appears from the information that I have at hand, that there are many compounding variables, within the zone potential impact formerly attributed to the heated discharge, which singularly, or collectively, could affect seagrass growth and/or recolonization. While elevated ambient temperatures are the focus of your company's concerns because of Section 316 requirements, it goes without argument the role of turbidity and associated light attenuation play relative to seagrass communities. Like the members of the TAC who were able to participate in the site visit, I, too, am unable to evaluate the interaction of elevated water temperature, turbidity, and light extinction, in the impact area versus control areas. From the information packages you have provided me, my only evidence of the turbidity fronts which have been discussed, is a single aerial photograph which, indeed, appears to indicate a zone of turbidity in excess of ambient, associated with the thermal plume area. I note within the meeting minutes the attribution of this turbidity to the affects of discharges from the Cross Florida Barge Canal. While I cannot refute or confirm this possibility, it does appear to me that the turbidity is most elevated within the thermal plume area. If this perception is correct, I think an appropriate consideration is whether any physical phenomena associated with the increased water temperature is conducive to enhancing, and sustaining, resuspension of sediments within the thermal plume area beyond what is measurable in adjacent coastal areas beyond the thermal plume. We cannot dismiss too quickly the affects of temperature interaction with other factors.

In closing, it is important for me to emphasize that the above comments are offered solely in a technical advisory capacity and does not reflect EPA's position on regulatory matters. Any such position must come from the NPDES program office in EPA's, Region IV, Water Division. Thanks for your patience with us during the past four difficult months.

Phillip Murphy, Acting Chief Ecological Support Branch U. S. Environmental Protection Agency





As a result of the 316 (a) and (b) studies which were conducted in June 1983 - August 1984, the EPA and FDEP determined that substantial damage had occurred within the zone of discharge to the Gulf of Mexico from the Crystal River site. The demonstration and subsequent determination was controversial due to the complex dynamics of the shallow receiving water body (zone of discharge), the lack of historical baseline data to document conditions within the region prior to the operation of Units 1, 2 and 3 and the lack of environmental justification to require FPC to mitigate for thermal impacts to Crystal Bay.

FPC continues to question if seagrass was ever present in all of the areas identified as being impacted from the thermal discharge from FPC following the 316 studies. A historical vegetation map for the study area provided by the University of Florida provides the only historical baseline map for comparison. The validity of the map is questionable since it does not provide a description of methods, date, an author or narrative.

Ecosystem stress to the biota within the zone of discharge is affected by factors unrelated to the operation of Units 1, 2 and 3 . These factors include salinity, turbidity, siltation and the geography of the area (i.e., fluctuation from the Cross Florida Barge Canal, the input of fresh water and suspended sediment from the Withlacoochee River and Homossassa Springs).

FPC strenuously objected to the requirement to construct helper cooling towers, due to the enormous cost and the lack of environmental justification. While the installation of cooling towers has reduced the temperature in the near shore area and subsequently limited heated water discharges, this change in temperature has not necessarily resulted in any significant measurable benefit to the Crystal Bay area. To date, FPC has completed construction of the helper cooling towers to mitigate for thermal impacts and completed the seagrass monitoring project as specified in the permit, at a cost of over \$90 million. Seagrass monitoring results are inconclusive and thus support FPC's initial contention that temperature is not the only factor which affects seagrass colonization in the area.

FPC has always doubted that a cost effective monitoring program could be developed to evaluate biological recovery within the zone of discharge as a function of thermal reductions. It would be difficult for biologists to isolate the individual components which contribute to ecosystem stress and determine their incremental influence on the aquatic community. Additionally, FPC should not be required to conduct long term monitoring to determine the limiting factor to seagrass recovery and/or attempt to identify the impact of light intensity, salinity, regional impacts and/or temperature impacts on seagrass recovery within the zone of discharge from the Crystal River site.

Given the fact that FPC initially questioned the environmental benefit of the construction of cooling towers and contended that temperature was not the limiting factor to seagrass colonization and that a monitoring program would not adequately evaluate biological recovery, FPC request that no further action be required with regard to the seagrass monitoring project.

In conclusion, FPC and members of the TAC currently agree that temperature is not the limiting factor to seagrass recovery. While the TAC suggest that additional data may be warranted to clearly identify the limiting factor to seagrass recovery, they concur that FPC has mitigated for past thermal impacts as required by the FDEP and EPA. FPC should not be required to conduct long term monitoring to determine the limiting factor to seagrass recovery since this is beyond the intent of the seagrass monitoring project. Additionally, an attempt to identify the impact of light intensity, salinity, regional impacts and/or temperature impacts on seagrass recovery within the zone of discharge from Crystal River is overly burdensome and may not result in any significant environmental benefit. Since temperature is not the limiting factor, sprig planting would obviously be futile if factors such as turbidity and light intensity are as limiting as they appear to be. The requirement to conduct sprig planting and subsequent seagrass planting and monitoring should be deleted from the NPDES permit.

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## RAI 3-4 Crystal River **1993** Seagrass Study

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1993 Summary Report for:

#### CRYSTAL RIVER 3 YEAR NPDES MONITORING PROJECT

#### FPC Contract S01100

Work Authorization 301 (Addenda **I** and 2)

submitted December 20, 1993 to

Ms. Manitia Moultrie Environmental Services Department Florida Power Corporation 3201 34th Street South St. Petersburg, Florida 33733

by the

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### INTRODUCTION

Florida Power Corporation (FPC) and federal and state regulatory agencies seek to demonstrate that the operation of new helper cooling towers at the FPC Crystal River Station will lead to an expansion in the area of benthic habitat occupied by submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV: seagrasses and rhizophytic macroalgae). A monitoring program was begun in the Fall of 1993 and will continue on an annual basis through the Fall of 1995. The monitoring program emphasizes near-shore waters within a two mile radius of the point of discharge (POD) of the Crystal River Station.

#### Available Information

Early surveys and aerials are described in the 316 Demonstration Report and the 1986 MML report, "Submerged Aquatic Vegetation in the Vicinity of the FPC Crystal River Power Station."

Studies performed in the 1970s by the University of Florida contained a single map by Martin Van Tine of "approximate attached macrophyte standing crop" during the summer of an unknown year (Florida Power Corporation, 1975). The map depicted areas of high and low standing crop, including barren areas. Nothing is known of sampling methods or effort.

Two SAV surveys were performed in the vicinity of the Crystal River Station during the 1980s. The first was conducted under MML supervision as part of the 316 Demonstration Study, in 1983 and 1984. The second was sponsored by FPC and conducted by MML in 1986, to determine the nature of offshore SAV beds closer to the influence of the Withlacoochee River.

The 316 Demonstration Study occupied 50 survey stations' "Thermal" stations fell along four transects between the Barge and Intake Canals. "Control" stations fell along three transects north of the Barge Canal and three transects south of the Intake Canal. (Thirteen of the 50 stations fall within a 2 mile radius from POD, north of the intake canal.) Ten squaremeter quadrats were deployed at each station and percent cover of seagrass and algae was determined in each. Nine "intensive" stations were equally divided among Halodule, Thalassia, and Syringodium sites in thermal and control areas. Intensive stations were visited on 6 week intervals. Biomass and productivity (2-week clip method) was measured at each station. No intensive stations were sampled in November of either year. Aerial

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photographs were taken in February of 1983 and 1984, and in October/November of 1983. Only three of eight planned, quarterly overflights produced successful aerial images due to poor water quality. Later ground-truthing resulted in **SAV** maps drawn at a scale of 1:18,000 on stable acetate.

Dense **SAV** was mapped south of the Intake Canal and between the Intake and Discharge Canals. Sparse SAV beds were mapped in Basins I and 3. SAV near Fisherman's Cut was seasonally variable. A large area of SAV in Basin 4 was more persistent. Most of these areas fall within a 2-mile POD radius. Barren areas were most widespread in Basins **1,** 2 and 3. Other results are presented in the 316 Demonstration Report.

In November 1986, MML surveyed 177 stations between the Barge and Intake Canals, west of the POD. Station density was determined through a statistical analysis of previous **SAV** bed distribution. (Twenty-five stations fell within a 2-mile POD radius.) Original LORAN positions of all stations are still available. At each station, 120 meter dive lines were surveyed for dispersion and abundance of **SAV.**

The survey found that most stations west of the 1983-84 study area contained SAV. SAV (especially sparse macroalgae) was also found at areas mapped as barren in the earlier studies. Caulerpa species were ubiquitous, but other rhizophytic algae were more common in the southern half of the survey area. Overall, there were declines in SAV richness and cover toward the north and toward the west, within the 1986 survey area. Extensive areas of drift and lithophytic Sargassum were also observed.

#### Rationale

The major questions to be answered by the monitoring plan are:

**1)** Are barren areas being colonized by **SAV?**

2) Are existing areas of **SAV** expanding?

To answer Question **1,** it is necessary to design and implement a robust survey program in barren areas. To answer Question 2, selected SAV beds will be surveyed at a very fine scale and results will be compared each year. Beds will be chosen on the basis of geographic (basin), depth, historic temperature, and species characteristics. The perimeter of selected beds will be staked and subsequent surveys will compare edge

 $2<sup>2</sup>$ 

locations to stake locations. To anticipate the possibility of stake loss, a second system of benchmarks and measurements was developed.

Professional aerial photography will be used' to backstop the field measurements. We have not recommended using aerial imagery as a primary source of SAV dispersion data because past experience has shown that turbidity, color, tide, sea surface conditions, and weather are significant impediments to successful photography at this site. On the other hand, when it is successful, aerial photography can reveal changes in SAV that fixedstation methods might miss. Consequently, we have arranged to fly the site and examine each year's new imagery prior to commencing field work, where possible. If the imagery is good, field time can be spent investigating apparent features and changes. If the imagery is poor, there will be no loss of data.

Important corollary questions include:

3) Changes in SAV cover outside of the designated study area (control sites);

4) Changes in the relative abundance of macroalgae, compared to seagrasses; and

**5)** Changes in the biomass or productivity of existing SAV beds.

We address Question 3 by occupying barren and vegetated sites in control sites, and by including these areas in the flight lines for aerial photography. Where- possible, control stations are selected at a variety of depths comparable to stations within the 2-mile POD radius.

We address Question 4 by measuring percent cover by species, and percent barren area, at stations within the SAV beds selected for more intensive surveys.

Changes in SAV biomass or productivity (Question 5) will be determined by sampling the intensive survey beds during August of each year. The 316 Demonstration Study reported a strong dependence of variation in these parameters, on time. Seagrass biomass and. productivity during the Fall are transitional between maxima in August and September, and minima in December and January. Consequently, it may be difficult to identify statistically significant differences between years, using November data. Interannual

differences are particularly difficult to detect in beds of mixed species, which are more common than single-species beds near Crystal River Station.

The 1994 Summary Report will include descriptions of methods and data resulting from the summer measurements of biomass and productivity.

#### **METHODS**

#### Positioning

Several independent systems were employed. Approximate station locations were mapped onto charts carried in the field, to depict the orientation of a station to creeks, islands, day marks, levees, and other land marks. The end points of transects were marked on land or in marshes with steel bars, stones, colored paint, or other permanent material. Locations were also determined by recording compass bearings to local landmarks.

Transect end points and station locations were measured using a Voyager LORAN Navigator and a Magellan NAVPRO global positioning system. Electronic positions also were measured for NOS benchmarks at the mouth of the discharge canal, and at the U.S. Geological Survey "Knott" benchmark on Drum Island. Preliminary analysis of the electronic data indicate high field reproducibility but relatively low map precision (see Discussion).

#### Barren Area Transects

Prospective barren areas were defined by analyzing historic data and conducting a reconnaissance of the study area. Effort was concentrated in areas suggested as once-vegetated by historical sources, but presently barren. Final transect locations were selected to cover the ranges of depths, bottom types, and thermal effects encountered at the site. As shown in Figure **1,** most effort was directed to Basins **1,** 2 and 3, with some effort in the areas of Basins 4 and 5, closest to the POD (e.g, inside the 2-mile radius).

Barren areas were surveyed by a diver towed behind a shallow draft vessel. Most transects ran due north or south to pre-determined landmarks. For long transects, or transects run under inclement weather, tows followed transect

lines marked in advance with temporary buoys. Buoys marked end points and way points, as needed. Beginning and end points were permanently positioned and marked. Where needed, tows were made into the current to reduce drift.

If the diver encountered seagrass or rhizophytic algae in barren areas the vessel stopped and marked the site(s). After the transect was finished, the crew returned to temporary markers. The immediate area was reconnoitered to determine the extent of SAV. If it corresponded to a previously-mapped SAV bed, it was recorded as "mapped" and was discounted as barren area. If new, the area, centroid position, species composition, and percent cover (see below) of the SAV was to be recorded, unless the vegetation was found to be Sargassum attached to rock outcrops<sup>1</sup>. All SAV markers and transect buoys were then recovered, and a new transect begun.

#### Intensive SAV BED Surveys

Sites were chosen for the initial surveys based on their location relative to the discharge canal. An initial field effort (a 2 day reconnaissance trip) was undertaken to determine present-day SAV bed locations. Previous mapping studies and aerial photographs of various ages were used as guides to areas'where SAV beds were known to have been present in the past. High probability areas were searched by skin divers and the 15 stations depicted in Figure **I** were occupied. The selection process divided the sites between 3 thermally un-impacted "control" sites and 12 impacted sites.

GPS and LORAN coordinates and compass sightings were used to record the location of seagrass beds selected for study. Several beds were marked by crab trap buoys anchored with screw-in tie down anchors. General site descriptions were recorded for each area in order to relocate the beds on subsequent trips.

Within each bed, the position of a "center" marker was determined by GPS, LORAN, and compass bearings. Center markers are hemispherical concrete parking lot markers. Each marker was painted with blue anti-fouling paint and anchored to the bottom with screw-in anchors. Concrete markers were tied to the anchors with 1" diameter nylon rope.

**I/** In fact, the only SAV encountered on barren-area transects was either already mapped, or Sargassum growing on rock outcrops.

Edges of all 15 sites were marked in order to determine whether the seagrass beds expand, contract, or remain unchanged during the duration of the three year study. New growth or contraction of existing seagrass bed edges will be determined by returning to the marked beds at one-year intervals. Seagrass bed edges were marked with short (<1.0 m) sections of 3/8" steel reinforcement rods driven into the bottom with a small sledge hammer. Each steel stake was allowed to extend about 10 cm upward from the sediment surface. Seagrass bed edges were usually very easy to define, based on the sharp delineations between bare bottom and vegetated bottom.

A surveyor's tape was strung out along the set of edge markers at each site. Distances between edge markers and the distance from the center marker to each edge marker were recorded. Relocation of the edge markers and center marker, on future site visits, will be facilitated by these measurements. It should also be possible to locate the exact position of lost edge markers if the center marker is found.

The percentage of bottom covered by SAV on the edge of each bed (from 0.0 to 1.0 m into each bed) and deeper into the bed (at a distance of 2.0 to 3.0 m) was measured. Ten 1.0 m2 quadrat-based estimates of bottom cover were taken along the vegetated edge of each SAV bed. The quadrats were positioned on the vegetated side of a randomly selected subset of the 15 edge markers at each site. Ten 1.0 m2 additional cover estimates were made by flipping the quadrat frame over twice away from the perimeter of each seagrass bed.

Subdivisions (100 cm2) of the 1.0 m2 quadrat were used as the units for the cover estimates. SAV coverage was determined by counting the number of units in which various species of SAV were actually rooted. A barren square was defined as being devoid of any rooted vegetation. Seagrass blades from plants rooted in other units were not counted as cover in the otherwise completely barren units. Four seagrasses (Halodule, Syringodium, Thalassia, and Halophila) were encountered in the study sites. Two species of the rhizophytic algal genus, Caulerpa, were found at several of the sites. Divers recorded data on slates and the data were transferred to log books for later use.

To document that water or sediment depths did not vary so much near the edges of **SAV** beds that future lateral growth might be inhibited, additional data were collected at each site. Water depth and sediment thickness were measured on the edge of each SAV bed and at 1.0 and 2.0 m distances into the barren zone. A marked measuring stick was used to measure water depth.

Sediment thickness was determined by pushing a 1.5 m long, 3/8" diameter iron rod into the bottom. The rod was pushed in to its full length or to the point of refusal. The rod was then withdrawn and the depth of penetration was measured. Measurements of each type were made adjacent to alternate stake markers along the edges of each of the 15 seagrass beds.

#### **DISCUSSION**

All data collected from the 1993 sampling effort appear in the tables and appendix tables that follow. These data form the baseline of descriptive information against which prospective changes in 1994 and 1995 will be measured.

As mentioned before, two additional types of data are likely to be generated before the barren transects and intensive SAV beds are revisited. If the 1993 aerial photography is successful, images will be photo-interpreted, ground-truthed, and digitally mapped by a subcontractor. An effort will be made during ground-truthing to distinguish lithophytic Sarqassum from seagrasses and rhizophytic algae. A separate report will accompany the maps.

The digital map will also be useful in plotting the precise locations of transects and intensive survey sites. At present, no existing base map is available at the level of detail needed to plot LORAN and GPS data collected in 1993. If the 1993 aerial photography is successful, the 1994 Summary Report will contain a registered base map showing the precise locations of transects and stations.

The second type of new information will result from the biomass and productivity studies first scheduled for August, 1994. We propose to perform the SAV condition monitoring in August of 1994 and 1995, for 3 reasons. First, November condition data are transitional between seasonal extremes, and highly variable. Second, August water temperatures are annual maxima, so impacts to SAV respiration and net productivity will be accentuated. Third, an August sampling time allows for laboratory processing of samples by the due date of the annual reports.

#### FIGURE **I**

The base map employed in Figure **1A** and 1B is a composite in which marsh and canal shorelines, and oyster reefs, have been added to the 1983 SAV map produced as part of the FPC 316 Demonstration Study. Shorelines were transferred from U.S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangles and oyster reefs were taken from unpublished data available at Mote Marine Laboratory. Spoil islands of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal appear at the top of the map, which is north. The discharge canal levee is the shorter feature depicted to the north of the longer levee on the intake canal. In the map, A denotes algal beds; **S,** seagrass beds; AS, mixed beds dominated by algae; SA, mixed beds dominated by seagrass; **0,** open or barren bottom.

#### FiQure **1A**

This figure depicts the number and orientation of barren area transects established for the present study. One transect, "13W", is not shown. It is north of the Barge Canal, extending from Green 35 day mark on the Canal, to Green 23A day mark on the Withlacoochee River. Note that most transects have at least one land-side end, which has been marked in the field with a permanent monument. Transect "9W" is 2 miles from the point of discharge.

#### Figure 1B

This figure depicts the locations of SAV beds selected for intensive surveys (percent cover, biomass, productivity, etc.). One station, "10", is immediately south of station "9" but off the figure. Stations 1-3 are in Basin **1.** Stations 5-7 are in Basin 2. Four stations between the canals are in Basin 3. Station 11 is in Rocky Cove. Station 13 is 2 miles from the point of discharge.



FIGURE **1A**



# Table **1.** Coordinates of seagrass survey transects.



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Table 2. Station locations for the seagrass bed edge observations.

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Table 5. Summary statistics for sediment depth from the grass bed perimeter.

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Table 6. Summary outside statistics for sediment depth from **1** meter the grass bed perimeter.

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Table 9. Summary statistics for sediment depth differences from summary statistics for sediment depth differences fi<br>the grass bed perimeter and 2 meters outside the be

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Table 10. Average percent cover (n=10) of Im quadrats on the perimeter and 2 meters inside the perimeter of seagrass beds.



Table 11. Counts of presence of seagrass and algae species in 1 m<sup>2</sup> quadrats inside (I) and on perimeters (P  $\mathbb{Z}^2$ 

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Appendix Table 2. Vegetation coverage (percent) in seagrass beds for  $1 \text{ m}^2$  quadrats along bed  $\cdot$ <br>perimeters and two meters inside beds.

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Appendix Table 2. Continued.

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### Appendix Table 2. Continued Page 4

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## RAI 3-4 Crystal River 1994 Seagrass Study

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1994 Summary Report for:

#### CRYSTAL RIVER 3 YEAR NPDES MONITORING PROJECT

#### FPC Contract SOI1O0

Work Authorization 401 (Addendum 2)

submitted December 19, 1994 to

Ms. Manitia Moultrie Environmental Services Department Florida Power Corporation 3201 34th Street South St. Petersburg, Florida 33733

by the

Mote Marine Laboratory 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway Sarasota, Florida 34236

Ernest D. Estevez, Ph.D. and Michael J. Marshall, Ph,.D.

Principal Investigators

**I-**

#### INTRODUCTION

Florida Power Corporation (FPC) and federal and state regulatory agencies seek to demonstrate that the operation of new helper cooling towers at the FPC Crystal River Station will lead to an expansion in the area of benthic habitat occupied by submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV: seagrasses and rhizophytic macroalgae). A monitoring program was begun in the Fall of 1993 and is continuing, on an annual basis through the Fall of 1995. The monitoring program emphasizes near-shore waters within a two mile radius from the point of discharge (POD) of the Crystal River Station.

The 1993 Summary Report (Estevez and Marshall, 1993<sup>1</sup>) reviewed SAV information available for the Crystal River Station area, and also provided the technical rationale for the present monitoring study. To recapitulate highlights of the rationale:

-- Past efforts at aerial photography have often met with failure due usually to turbidity;

**--** New monitoring should take advantage of successful photography but not depend upon it;

-- Surveys are needed to determine whether new SAV beds are recruiting into barren areas, especially the areas that once supported SAV;

-- In the event that barren areas are not recolonized, existing SAV beds should be monitored to determine whether they are expanding along their margins;

-- If **SAV** is not expanding or colonizing new areas, there may be signs of improvement within existing beds insofar as **SAV** condition (biomass, productivity) is concerned. Say condition in August 1994 should be compared to condition in August of 1995 for indications of improvements, although the variances are expected to be high.

 $1/$ Estevez, E.D. and M.A. Marshall. 1993. 1993 summary report for Crystal River 3 year NPDES monitoring project, FPC Contract No. S01100. Mote Marine Laboratory Technical Report Number 343. Sarasota FL.

This report summarizes findings for barren area surveys, "perimeter" studies at intensive SAV beds, and the August 1994 condition assessment.

#### METHODS

#### Positioning

Several independent systems were employed. Approximate station locations were mapped onto charts carried in the field, to depict the orientation of a station to creeks, islands, day marks, levees, and other land marks. LORAN and **GPS** coordinates of all stations and transects, measured in 1993, were also taken into the field. As needed, the end points of transects that were marked on land or in marshes with steel bars, stones, colored paint, or other permanent material were replaced.

In 1994, transect end points and station locations were again measured using a Voyager LORAN Navigator and a Magellan NAVPRO global positioning system. Electronic positions also were measured for NOS benchmarks at the mouth of the discharge canal, and at the U.S. Geological Survey "Knott" benchmark on Drum Island. Preliminary analysis of the electronic data indicate high field accuracy but relatively low map precision (see Discussion).

#### Barren Area Transects

Barren area transects established in 1993 were revisited in October 1994. As shown in Figure **1,** most effort was directed to Basins **1,** 2 and 3, with some effort in the areas of Basins 4 and 5, closest to the POD (e.g, inside the 2-mile radius).

Barren areas were surveyed by a diver towed behind a shallow draft vessel. Most transects ran due north or south to pre-determined landmarks. For long transects, tows followed transect lines marked in advance with temporary buoys. Buoys marked end points and way points, as needed. Beginning and end points were permanently positioned and marked. Where needed, tows were made into the current to reduce drift.

If the diver encountered seagrass or rhizophytic algae in barren areas the vessel stopped and marked the site(s). The immediate area was reconnoitered to determine the extent of SAV. If it corresponded to a previously-mapped SAV bed, it was recorded as "mapped" and was discounted as barren area. If new, the area, centroid position, species composition, and percent cover (see below) of the **SAV** was to be recorded, unless the vegetation was found to be Sarqassum attached to rock outcrops. SAV markers were then recovered, and the survey of the transect continued.

#### Intensive **SAV** BED Surveys

In October 1994, GPS and LORAN coordinates and compass sightings were used to relocate the seagrass beds selected for study. Several beds were marked by crab trap buoys anchored with screw-in tie down anchors to facilitate site recovery in 1995.

Within each bed, the position of a "center" marker was determined in 1993 by GPS, LORAN, and compass bearings. Center markers are hemispherical concrete parking lot markers. Each marker was painted with blue anti-fouling paint and anchored to the bottom With screw-in anchors. Concrete markers were tied to the anchors with **1"** diameter nylon rope.

Edges of all 15 sites were marked during 1993 in order to determine whether the seagrass beds expand, contract, or remain unchanged during the duration of the three year study.

Seagrass bed edges were marked with short (<1.0 m) sections of 3/8" steel reinforcement rods driven into the bottom with a small sledge hammer. Each. steel stake was allowed to extend about 10 cm upward from the sediment surface. Seagrass bed edges were usually very easy to define, based on the sharp delineations between bare bottom and vegetated bottom.

A surveyor's tape was strung out along the set of edge markers at each site. In 1993, distances between edge markers and the distance from the center marker to each edge marker were recorded.

In 1994, bed markers were found by wading, snorkeling, or pulling a weighted polypropylene line across the bottom. Center markers and edge markers were relocated or replaced as needed. The majority of markers was relocated, so that only a few needed to be replaced. PVC poles were installed next to

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each edge marker to simplify working in turbid water. The distance of the actual SAV bed edge was tape-measured from the edge marker. Seaward changes were recorded as expansions. Changes toward the central bed marker were recorded as contractions.

As in 1993, the percentage of bottom covered by SAV on the edge of each bed (from 0.0 to 1.0 m into each bed) and deeper into, the bed (at a distance of 2.0 to 3.0 m) was measured. Ten 1.0 m2 quadrat-based estimates of bottom cover were taken along the vegetated edge of each SAV bed. The quadrats were positioned on the vegetated side of a randomly selected subset of the 15 edge markers at each site. Ten 1.0 m2 additional cover estimates were made by flipping the quadrat frame over twice away from the perimeter of each seagrass bed.

Subdivisions (100 cm2) of the 1.0 m2 quadrat were used as the units for the cover estimates. SAV coverage was determined by counting the number of units in which various species of SAV were actually rooted. A barren square was defined as being devoid of any rooted vegetation. Seagrass blades from plants rooted in other units were not counted as cover in the otherwise completely barren units. Four seagrasses (Halodule, Syringodium, Thalassia, and Halophila) were encountered in the study sites. Two species of the rhizophytic algal genus, Caulerga, were found at several of the sites. Divers recorded data on slates and the data were transferred to log books for later use.

#### SAV Condition

Condition was defined as SAV shoot count, above-ground biomass, and productivity. Methods and effort followed the 316 Demonstration Study (Mattson et al., 1986<sup>2</sup>) with some variations as noted below. SAV condition was measured at the 15 intensive beds that are used for perimeter measurements in the 1993-95 monitoring program.

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<sup>2/</sup> Mattson, R., J.A. Derrenbacker, Jr. and R.R. Lewis. 1986. Effects of thermal addition from the Crystal River generating complex on the submerged macrophytic communities in Crystal Bay, Florida, pp. 11-67 in K. Mahadevan et al. (eds.), Proceedings, Southeastern Workshop on Aquatic Ecological Effects of Power Generation, Mote Marine Laboratory Technical Report Number 124. Sarasota FL.

At each station, 6 samples for biomass of seagrasses and rhizophytic macroalgae were collected with a 25x25 cm sampler. The sampler was a PVC frame partially covered by a dive bag. Macrophytes clipped at the sediment surface floated into the upturned bag, which was labelled, closed and removed before moving to the next clip site. Contents of 6 samples were sorted into seagrasses (by species) and algae (pooled). Sorted samples were dri'ed to constant weight at **1050** C and weighed.

Seagrass productivity was determined as 14 day regrowth. At least 4, and usually 5 or 6, replicate measurements were made in each bed, using 11.3 cm diameter clip rings for Halodule, or 16.7 cm diameter clip rings for other seagrasses. After clip rings were installed, all SAV was clipped level with the surface of the ring, and discarded. Two weeks later, new growth was harvested, sorted, preserved, and labelled. Samples were dried to constant weight at **700** C and weighed. Seagrass shoot densities were measured by counting the shoots collected in the clip rings after 14 days of regrowth.

As biomass and productivity samples were being made in the field, percent cover was measured within the interior of each bed. Percent cover was determined by the same methods employed in annual sampling.

#### RESULTS

All data collected from the 1994 sampling effort appear in the tables and appendix tables that follow. Data from 1993 are included where appropriate.

#### Barren Area Transects

Three **SAV** beds were encountered in 1994 that were not seen when the transects were established in 1993 (Table **1).** Two were Halodule beds and the third was a mixed Halodule-Syrinqodium bed with small amounts of the green alga, Caulerpa.

One of the "new" beds was found on Transect IN, which is Basin 1. It was a small (7x10 m), sparse (5% mean cover) Halodule bed with short (<5 cm) blades. The bed was growing in a silty sand underlain by rock. Many large

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(10-20 cm) burrows were found in the rock near the bed and elsewhere on the Basin I flats crossed by Transects IN, IW and 2W. The burrows were not seen in 1993.

Another Halodule bed was found on Transect 3W, in Basin 2. The bed covered 40 m of transect on flats southwest of Thumb Island. The north end of the bed was characterized by sparse calcareous green algae and Halodule was the principal SAV at the bed's southern end. Average percent cover of Halodule near the south end of the bed was 48%.

A third novel bed was found on Transect 5W, which crosses from Basin 2 into Basin 3. The bed was found in the Basin 2 portion of the transect, south of Drum Island. The bed was a mixture of small, dense patches of either Caulerpa (4% mean cover) or Halodule (14% mean cover), with the two sometimes combined. Syringodium was present but rare (30% cover in **1** of 10 replicates.

#### Perimeter Beds

Thirteen of 15 intensively studied SAV beds had positive growth along their margins since 1993, based on the mean change observed at 10 to **16** reference markers per bed (Table 2). Mean expansion ranged from 0.06 m to 6.51 m. Standard deviations usually exceeded means because considerable variation was measured, ranging in expanding beds from 0.0 to 14.0 m.

Two stations, 3 in Basin I and 5 in Basin 2, contracted by -0.38 m and - 0.21 m in terms of their respective mean values.

On a basin-wise basis, Basin 3 SAV beds showed approximately twice the mean expansion values as beds in Basins **I** or 2, or control beds south of the intake canal.

#### Percent Cover

The majority of cases in both 1993 and 1994 were such that percent cover measurements were made on algae-free SAV beds (Table 3). Although algae were present in some cases, the cover and changes in cover of seagrass generally represent the same values as data for "total vegetation".

In 1994, no basin-wise differences in mean cover were significant. Basin 3 had greater than 90% cover compared to mean covers of 71-78% in Basin **1** and 61-70% in Basin 2.

Percent cover was determined along the perimeters of beds and in the bed interior (Table 4). For both locations, as many beds had increases in seagrass cover as had decreases (7 each, **1** with no data). Perimeter samples averaged a decrease in percent cover of 5.1% from 1993 to 1994, whereas interior samples averaged a decrease of 3.4% over the same period. No basin-wise patterns or trends in cover change were seen.

#### **Biomass**

Biomass was evaluated for individual seagrass species, all seagrass, and all vegetation (Table 5). For Halodule, biomass had a bimodal distribution when plotted in terms of station proximity to the POD (Figure 2A). Stations I and 15 had maximum Halodule biomass values, but no significant differences occurred between station pairs.

Syringodium occurred at fewer stations but biomass data also displayed a bimodal distribution with respect to station order (Figure 2B). It is noteworthy that the relationship between percent cover and biomass of Syringodium was meaningful whereas the relationship for Halodule was not (Figure 3).

Combining all seagrass species biomass obscured the bimodal pattern seen for individual species biomass (Figure 4), although it is evident that stations closest to the POD had much lower mean biomass values than more distant stations. Mean seagrass biomass values for the six stations closest to the POD were significantly lower than mean biomass values for 3 more distant stations (9,11, and 12).

All vegetation (seagrass plus rhizophytic macroalgae) biomass accentuated the spatial pattern seen for all seagrass species combined (Figure 4). Distant stations north of the Intake Canal had greater mean biomass values than stations closer to the POD, due largely to the increased abundance of macroalgae.

#### Shoot Density

Mean numbers of Halodule shoots per square meter also displayed a bimodal distribution with respect to station order (Figure 5), whereas the pattern was not as evident for Syringodium.

#### Productivity

Clip data (Table 6) were normalized for regrowth period and sample size to calculate productivity as mg dry weight per square meter per day (Table 7). Halodule productivity data were bimodally distributed with respect to station proximity to the POD, whereas Syringodium productivity was not (Figure 6).

#### DISCUSSION

Based on data from 1993 and 1994, including data collected for the first time in 1994, the following points are offered.

1. "New" SAV beds appeared along barren-area transects. Three beds were found in 1994 that were not seen in 1993. Two are small Halodule beds in relatively close proximity (Basins **I** and 2) to the point of discharge. The apparent recruitment of beds into barren areas could be an artifact of sampling dates (November-December 1993 versus October 1994), especially for the multiple species bed on Transect 5 near Drum Island. Beds on transects closer to the point of discharge are more likely to be genuine additions, because the tidal flats in that area are shallow, easily surveyed, and frequently visited. Surveys in 1995 will determine whether these beds have persisted or grown, and whether additional new beds occur.

2. Recruitment of new beds into barren areas has not been extensive. During the first full year of monitoring, there was no evidence that SAV was colonizing extensive areas of barren sediment. This suggests that seasonal differences in SAV cover were not great from 1993 to 1994. Historical data indicate that losses of SAV along the southern side of Basin 3 were considerable. The record is moot as to whether the cause of this decline was thermal stress, turbidity, or other factor(s). To the extent that

thermal stress was involved, the southern side of Basin 3 remains a likely area to expect SAV colonization during the coming year.

3. The seaward edges of selected SAV beds have expanded. Thirteen of 15 SAV beds had positive growth along their margins since 1993, on the order of 0.7 to 1.4 m. Basin 3 SAV beds showed approximately twice the mean expansion values as beds in other basins. This trend could be an artifact of sampling a month earlier in 1994 than in 1993. Sampling in 1995 will be directly comparable to 1994 sampling and will provide insight to the permanence of bed expansion.

4. No significant patterns in 1994 SAV cover were observed. In 1994, Basin 3 beds had higher percent cover<sup>3</sup> averages than beds in other basins. Compared to 1993, there were small (<5.1%) decreases in percent cover along the perimeter and within the interior of beds. Neither temporal trends nor spatial patterns in percent cover were significant.

5. Other indicators of SAV condition covaried and were distributed in a bimodal pattern with respect to station proximity to the POD. Biomass, shoot density, and productivity rates increased, decreased (to minima at Station 5), and then increased relative to distance from the POD, especially for Halodule. This pattern suggests that more than one factor influences spatial variation in seagrass condition, a finding consistent with previous investigations.

6. Combining species of seaqrass or adding rhizophytic macroalgae tocondition data transforms spatial patterns. Mean station biomass values are bimodal on a species basis. Combining species or adding algae changes the spatial pattern so that biomass increases with distance from the-POD. Total biomass is much lower at the 6 stations closest to the POD than at more distant stations, reflecting algal contributions.

#### Photography and Mapping

The 1993-94 aerial photography effort was unsuccessful due to low water clarity. A 1994-95 effort is in progress. If it is successful, images will be photo-interpreted, ground-truthed, and digitally mapped by a subcontractor. An effort will be made during ground-truthing to distinguish

**<sup>3/</sup>** Of seagrasses, the dominant component of total SAV.

lithophytic Sarqassum from seagrasses and rhizophytic algae. A separate report will accompany the maps. Progress has also been made in producing an independent GIS map of the study area, at the level of detail needed to plot LORAN and GPS data collected in 1993 and 1994. A draft GIS product was submitted to FPC in October 1994 and a final version will be submitted for approval as soon as a computer hardware failure is repaired.

#### Conclusions

In 1994 the monitoring program at Crystal River produced repeat data and new data concerning the occurrence, spatial extent, and condition of SAV within a 2 mile radius of the point of discharge. Repeat data indicate that existing **SAV** beds are stable. No evidence was found that existing beds were retreating from their 1993 dimensions. Most beds expanded along their margins, by an amount that could be due to the one month difference in sampling time. Condition data suggest that the expansion was not an artifact of sampling date, and surveys in 1995 will determine whether expansion is continuing. Condition data were either uninformative (percent cover) or indicated a bimodal spatial pattern relative to proximity of stations to the POD. Shoot densities, biomass, and productivity tended to increase with distance from the POD but the pattern of increases indicates that several factors affect SAV condition. Data to be collected in 1995 will reveal the persistence of these patterns and allow for trends to be identified between years. In 1994, three beds of mostly Halodule were encountered along transects crossing areas that were barren in 1993. One bed was in Basin **1,** very close to the POD. Other beds appeared in. Basin 2, the area next closest to the POD. No new beds were found in Basin 3, where colonization of barren areas was expected on the basis of historic data, but colonization in Basins 1 and 2 offer hope that additional recruitment will be detected throughout the study area in 1995.

#### FIGURE **I**

The base map employed in Figure **1A** and 1B is a composite in which marsh and canal shorelines, and oyster reefs, have been added to the 1983 SAV map produced as part of the FPC 316 Demonstration Study. Shorelines were transferred from U.S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangles and oyster reefs were taken from unpublished data available at Mote Marine Laboratory. Spoil islands of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal appear at the top of the map, which is north. The discharge canal levee is the shorter feature depicted to the north of the longer levee on the intake canal. In the map, A denotes algal beds; S, seagrass beds; AS, mixed beds dominated by algae; SA, mixed beds dominated by seagrass; **0,** open or barren bottom.

#### Figure **IA**

This figure depicts the number and orientation of barren area transects established for the present study. One transect, "13W", is not shown. It is north of the Barge Canal, extending from Green 35 day mark on the Canal, to Green 23A day mark on the Withlacoochee River. Note that most transects have at least one land-side end, which has been marked in the field with a permanent monument. Transect "9W" is 2 miles from the point of discharge.

The locations of 3 "new" barren area SAV beds encountered in 1994 are highlighted with asterisks (\*).

#### Figure 1B

This figure depicts the locations of SAV beds selected for intensive surveys (percent cover, biomass, productivity, etc.). One station, "10", is immediately south of station "9" but off the figure. Stations 1-3 are in Basin 1. Stations 5-7 are in Basin 2. Four stations between the canals are in Basin 3. Station 11 is in Rocky Cove. Station 13 is 2 miles from the point of discharge.



FIGURE 1A: Barren Area Transects



FIGURE 1B: Intensive SAV Beds



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Biomass in order of station proximity to POD.<br>A, Halodule; B, Syringodium. Figure 2.



Biomass vs. Percent Cover (mean station values). A, Halodule: B, Syringodium Figure 3.



Biomass in order of station proximity to POD.<br>A, All vegetation; B, All seagrass. Figure 4.


Figure,5. Shoot density in order of station proximity to POD. A, Halodule. B, Syringodium.



Figure 6. Productivity in order to POD. A, Halodule; of station proximity B, Syringodium.



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Table **1.** SAV beds found in October 1994 on 1993 barren area transects.

Table 2. Expansion of seagrass 1993-October 1994. beds measured along staked edges: Decembe

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Table 3. Counts of presence of seagrass and algae species in Im2 quadrats inside **(1)** and on perimeters (P) of grass beds. **Contractor** 

#### Table 3. Continued.

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Table 4. Average percent cover (n = 10) of **I** m quadrats on the perimeter and **2** m inside the perimeter of seagrass beds for each station and date.

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# Table 5. Continued.

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Table **6.** Dry weights (ug) from clipped 14-day growth samples.



# Productivity **Biomass**



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Appendix Table 1. Station locations for the seagrass bed edge observations in 1994.

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Appendix Table 2. Vegetation coverage (percent) in seagrass beds for lm<sup>2</sup> quadrats along bed perimeters and 2 meters inside beds.

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Page 9

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Page **17**

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Date	Station Rep.		Perimeter/ Interior (P/I)	Total <b>Vegetation Seagrass</b>	Total	Total Algae	<b>Species</b>	Cover
1994-10	4	3	P	75	75	0	Syringodium filiforme	7 <sub>5</sub>
1994-10	4	3	I	87	87	0	Syringodium filiforme	87
1994-10	4	4	P	91	89	$\overline{\mathbf{c}}$	Caulerpa prolifera	$\mathbf{2}$
1994-10	4	4	p	91	89	$\overline{\mathbf{c}}$	Syringodium filiforme	89
1994-10	4	4	I	88	88	3	Syringodium filiforme	88
1994-10	4	4	I	88	88	3	Halimeda incrassata	$\mathbf{3}$
1994-10	4	5	P	57	57	0	Syringodium filiforme	57
1994-10	4	5	I	$\overline{c}$	$\mathbf{2}$	0	Syringodium filiforme	$\overline{c}$
1994-10	4	6	P	13	13	0	Syringodium filiforme	13
1994-10	4	6	I	22	22	$\pmb{0}$	Syringodium filiforme	22
1994-10	4	7	p	89	89	$\boldsymbol{z}$	Syringodium filiforme	89
1994-10	4	7	P	89	89	$\overline{\mathbf{c}}$	Caulerpa prolifera	$\overline{c}$
1994-10	4 4	7 7	I	79 79	78	ı	Caulerpa prolifera	$\mathbf{1}$
1994-10 1994-10	4	8	P	100	78 100	1	Syringodium filiforme	78
1994-10	4	8	P	100	100	14 14	Penicillus sp.	$\overline{2}$ $\ddot{\mathbf{4}}$
1994-10	4	8	P	100	100	14	Syringodium filiforme Caulerpa prolifera	8
1994-10	4	8	P	100	100	14	Syringodium filiforme	100
1994-10	4	8	I	88	88	$\boldsymbol{0}$	Syringodium filiforme	88
1994-10	4	9	P	80	80	0	Syringodium filiforme	80
1994-10	4	9	I	30	30	0	Syringodium filiforme	30
1994-10	4	10	P	92	92	$\overline{\mathbf{c}}$	Halimeda incrassata	$\mathbf 1$
1994-10	4	10	P	92	92	2	Caulerpa prolifera	1
1994-10	4	10	P	92	92	$\overline{\mathbf{c}}$	Syringodium filiforme	92
1994-10	4	10	I	94	94	$\mathbf 0$	Syringodium filiforme	94
1994-10	5	1	P	46	46	0	Halodule wrightii	46
1994-10	5	ļ	I	24	24	0	Halodule wrightii	24
1994-10	5	$\overline{\mathbf{c}}$	P	52	52	0	Halodule wrightii	52
1994-10	5	$\frac{2}{3}$	I	29	29	0	Halodule wrightii	29
1994-10	5		P	14	14	$\mathbf 0$	Halodule wrightii	14
1994-10	5	3	I	60	60	$\boldsymbol{0}$	Halodule wrightii	60
1994-10	5	4	P	15	15	0	Halodule wrightii	15
1994-10	5.	4	I	51	51	0	Halodule wrightii	51
1994-10	5	5	P	22	22	0	Halodule wrightii	22
1994-10	5	5	I	53	53	0	Halodule wrightii	53
1994-10	5	6	P	73	73	0	Halodule wrightii	73
1994-10	5	6	I	$\boldsymbol{6}$	5	0	Halodule wrightii	5
1994-10	5	6	I	$6\phantom{1}6$	5	0	Halophila englemannii	$\mathbf{1}$
1994-10	5	7	P	13	13	0	Halodule wrightii	13
1994-10	5	7	I	19	19	$\bf{0}$	Halodule wrightii	19
1994-10	5 5	8 8 9	P I	8	8	0	Halodule wrightii	8
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1994-10	5	10	I	86	$6\phantom{1}6$	0	Halodule wrightii	6
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Appendix Table 3. Expansion or contraction of seagrass beds measured from staked edges: December 1993-October 1994. The "Perimeter" and "Radius" distances identify the stakes.



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Appendix Table 4. Dry weight biomass from 25 cm x 25 cm quadrats.

Station Rep. Spp. **Biomass** (q) **I I** *Halodule wrightil* 1.53 1 2 *Halodule wrightii* 1.66 1 3 *Halodule wrightii* 0.55 1 4 Halodule *wrightii*<br>1 5 Halodule wrightii 1 5 *Halodule wrightii* 1 0.98<br>1 6 *Halodule wrightii* 2.74 1 6 *Halodule wrightii* 3.74<br>2 1 *Halodule wrightii* 0.63 2 **1** *Halodule wrightil* 0.63 2 2 *Halodule wrightii* 1.06 2 3 *Halodule wrightii* 0.70 2 4 *Halodule wrightii* 0.97 2 5 *Halodule wrightil* 0.87 2 6 *Halodule wrightHi* 0.67 3 **1** *Halodule wrightii* 0.48 3 2 *Halodule wrightii* 0.12 3 3 *Halodule wrightii* 0.56 3 4 *Halodule wrightil* 0.40 3 5 *Halodule wrightii* 1.18 3 6 *Halodule wrightii* **0.39** <sup>4</sup>**1** Drift Algae 4.96 <sup>4</sup>**1** *Syringodium filiforme* 4.14 4 2 *Syringodium filiforme* 1.51 4 3 Syringodium *filiforme* 1.90 4 4 Drift Algae 5.30<br>4 4 Syringodium filiforme 2.76 4 4 *Syringodium filiforme* 2.76 4 5 *Syrlngodlum filiforme* 2.27 4 6 *Syringodium filiforme* 3.49<br>5 1 *Halodule wrightii* 0.50<br>5 2 *Halodule wrightii* 0.16<br>5 3 *Halodule wrightii* 1.13 <sup>5</sup>**1** *Halodule wrightii* 0.50 5 2 *Halodule wrightii* 0.16 5 3 *Halodule wrightii*<br>5 4 *Halodule wrightii*<br>5 5 *Halodule wrightii* 5 4 *Halodule wrightii* 0.29 5 5 *Halodule wrightii* 0.35 5 6 *Halodule wrightil* 0.75 6 1 *Halodule wrightii* 1.15<br>6 2 *Halodule wrightii* 0.43 6 2 *Halodule wrightii* 0.43 6 3 *Halodule wrightii* 1.96 6 3 *Halodule wrighti* 0.70 6 4 *Halodule wrightil* 2.04 6 5 *Halodule wrightii* 0.51 6 6 *Halodule wrightii* 0.83 <sup>7</sup>**1** *Halodule wrightil* 0.83 7 2 *Halodule wrightii* 1.31 7 3 *Halodule wrightii* 1.51 7 4 *Halodule wrightii* 1.55 7 4 *Halophila englemannii* 0.19 7 5 *Halodule wrightii* 0.73 7 5 *Halophila englemannii* 0.69 7 6 *Halodule wrightii* 0.94 8 1 Drift Algae 0.56<br>8 1 *Halodule wrightii* 1.25 8 1 *Halodule wrightii* 1.25

Station Rep. Spp. **Biomass** (g)

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### Appendix Table 4. Continued.

Station Rep. Spp. Biomass **(q)**

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Appendix Table 5. Biomass (ug) of 14-day growth clip samples.

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Appendix Table 6. Productivity (mg/m2/day) and number of shoots grass clip samples per m2 calculated from

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# RAI 3-4 Crystal River **1995** Seagrass Study

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1995 Summary Report for: CRYSTAL RIVER 3 YEAR NPDES MONITORING PROJECT FPC Contract S01100

Work Authorization 501 (Addendum 1)

submitted December 15, 1995 to

Ms. Manitia Moultrie Environmental Services Department Florida Power Corporation 3201 34th Street South St. Petersburg, Florida 33733

by the

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'Principal Investigators

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Florida Power Corporation (FPC) and federal and state regulatory agencies seek to demonstrate that the operation of new helper coolihg towers at the FPC Crystal River Station will, lead to an expansion in the area of benthic habitat occupied by submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV; seagrasses and rhizophytic macroalgae). A monitoring program was begun in the Fall of 1993 and was completed in the Fall of 1995. The monitoring program emphasized near-shore waters within a two mile radius from the point of discharge (POD) of the Crystal River Station,.

The major questions to be answered by the monitoring plan were **1)** Are, barren areas being colonized by SAV?, and 2) Are existing areas of SAV expanding? To answer Question **1,** it was necessary to design and: implement a robust survey program in barren areas. To answer Question 2. selected SAV beds were surveyed at a very fine scale and results were compared between years. Important corollary questions included: 3) Changes in SAV cover outside of the designated study area (control sites); 4) Changes in the relative abundance of 'macroalgae, compared to seagrasses: and. 5) Changes in the biomass or productivity of existing SAV beds. We addressed Question 3 by occupying barren and vegetated sites in control sites. We addressed Question 4 by measuring percent cover by species, and percent barren area, at stations within the SAV beds selected for more intensive surveys. Changes in SAV biomass or productivity (Question 5) were determined by sampling the intensive survey beds during August of each year.

Professional aerial photography was to be used to backstop the field measurements. We did not recommend using aerial imagery as a primary source of SAV dispersion data because past experience has shown that turbidity, color, tide, sea surface conditions,. and weather are significant impediments to successful photography at this site. Aerial photography scheduled for 1993 was not completed until spring of 1994 because of unSuitable weather and water conditions. Usefulness of 1994 images was marginal due to turbidity fronts in Basins **1** and 2. equivalent to the study area within a 2 mile POD radius. Photography authorized for fall 1994 was not completed despite extended readiness through 1995. Flight conditions were hampered during winter 1994-95, and unusual tropical storm conditions reduced water clarity during summer and fall, 1995.

Our plans for field sampling were informed by the record of poor<br>conditions for aerial photography at the site. Lack of contemporaneous<br>aerial photographs prevented the production of digitized SAV maps, but did not hamper our ability to monitor barren and vegetated areas throughout the study area, in order to answer project questions. Future attempts at aerial photography should be made, with or without collateral field sampling, as opportunities, arise.

#### Results

Exhibit, I summarizes all results from the 3 year monitoring program. In **1993,** barren area transects encountered few SAV beds, and these were

previously known. The 1993 survey established that most of Basins 1-3 were barren of seagrasses. By 1994, 3 new beds had developed, all north of the Discharge Canal. Two of the 1994 beds could not be found in 1995, but 3 other beds were discovered. These also were north of the Discharge Canal. The gross increase in new seagrass areas during the 3 year survey period was 6 beds. Two failed to persist to 1995. Compared to 1993 conditions. 4 new beds were added to Basins **1** and 2. There were, in general. no signs.of bed development in the middle or southern areas of the 2 basins closest to the POD. However, one new 1994 Halodule bed was only a few hundred meters from the POD. There was some minor coverage of new seagrass and rhizophytic algae in the southern part of Basin 3.

Twelve of fifteen beds selected for intensive monitoring expanded beyond their 1993 perimeters, by 1994. Eight expanded between 1993 and 1995. The majority of intensively studied beds also showed increases in percent cover, both along their edges and within their interiors, from 1993 to 1994. The 1994 to 1995 period saw fewer beds with increased cover. perhaps owing to the wet summer of 1995. Biomass measurements also depicted declines from 1994 to 1995. although 14 of the 15 intensively studied beds showed increases in daily productivity rates. These responses are consistent with the effects of tropical storm activity and above-average rainfall and river discharges.

Based on data from 1993, 1994, and 1995, the following points are offered.

1. "New" SAV beds appeared along barren-area transects.

2. Recruitment of new beds into barren areas has not been extensive.<br>3. All of the new beds have formed north of the point of discharge.

All of the new beds have formed north of the point of discharge. in Basins 1 and 2.

The seaward edges of SAV beds have expanded at 8 of 15 intensively monitored SAV stations.

5. Patterns of change in percent cover, from 1993 to 1995. showed decreased coverages (by total vegetation) at 10 of 15 sites. **6.** Biomass distribution patterns showed a general decline from 1993 to 1995 at 10 of 15 sites irrespective of distance from the POD. 7. Shoot densities increased by 1995 for Halodule at 8 of the 10 stations where it was present in 1994.

8. SAV production rates showed large increases from 1994 to 1995 in Basins **1.** 2 and 3, closest to the point of discharge.

Overall. monitoring revealed spatial as well as temporal patterns in the distribution of sea grasses and rhizophytic algae. Most patterns depicted a system of bed recruitment and expansion that promoted persistence. and for several parameters (Exhibit **I),** improvements in SAV cover and condition during the three years. No abiotic parameters were measured in this program, so it is not possible to assign causes for the SAV changes observed during the past 3 years. Changes in transects and beds within the 2 mile POD radius were mirrored by changes at more distant sites, indicating the extent of the 1995 wet season on the region. as well as the study area.



Exhibit **1,** 1993-1995 Summary data. Crystal River NPDES Monitoring Project.

<sup>2</sup> Of two remaining marked beds in this area.

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Appendix Tables

#### INTRODUCTION

Florida Power Corporation (FPC) and federal and state regulatory agencies seek to demonstrate that the operation of new helper cooling towers at the FPC Crystal River Station will lead to an expansion in the area.of benthic habitat occupied by submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV: seagrasses and rhizophytic macroalgae). A monitoring program was begun in the Fall of 1993 and was completed in the Fall of 1995. The monitoring program emphasizes near-shore waters within a two mile radius from the point of discharge (POD) of the Crystal River Station (Figure 1).

#### Available Information

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Early surveys and aerials are described in the 316 Demonstration Report and the 1986 MML report, "Submerged Aquatic Vegetation in the Vicinity of the FPC Crystal River Power Station."

Studies performed in the 1970s by the University of Florida contained a single map by Martin Van Tine of "approximate attached macrophyte standing crop" during the summer of an unknown year (Florida Power Corporation. 1975). The map depicted areas of high and low standing crop, including barren areas. Nothing is known of sampling methods or effort.

Two SAV surveys were performed in the vicinity of the Crystal River Station during the 1980s. The first was conducted under MML supervision as part of the 316 Demonstration Study, in 1983 and 1984. The second was sponsored by FPC and conducted by MML in 1986, to determine the nature of offshore SAV beds closer to the influence of the Withlacoochee River.

The 316 Demonstration Study occupied 50 survey stations. "Thermal" stations fell along four transects between the Barge and Intake Canals. "Control" stations fell along three transects north of the Barge Canal and three transects south of the Intake Canal. (Thirteen of the 50 stations fall within a 2 mile radius from POD. north of the intake canal.) Ten squaremeter quadrats were deployed at each station and percent cover of seagrass and algae was determined in each. Nine "intensive" stations were equally divided among Halodule, Thalassia, and Syringodium sites in thermal and control areas. Intensive stations were visited on 6 week intervals. Biomass and productivity (2-week clip method) was measured at each station.

No intensive stations were sampled in November of either year. Aerial photographs were taken in February of'1983 and 1984, and in. October/November of 1983. Only three of eight planned. quarterly overflights produced successful aerial images due to poor water quality. Later ground-truthing resulted in SAV maps drawn at a scale of 1:18,000 on stable acetate.

Dense SAV was mapped south of the Intake Canal and between the Intake and Discharge Canals. Sparse: SAV beds were mapped in Basins 1 and 3. SAV near Fisherman's Cut was seasonally variable. A large area of SAV in Basin 4 was more persistent. Most of these areas fall within a 2-mile POD radius. Barren areas were most widespread in Basins 1, 2 and 3. Other results are presented in the 316 Demonstration Report.

In November 1986. MML surveyed 177 stations between the Barge and Intake Canals, west of the POD. Station density was determined through a statistical analysis of previous SAV bed distribution. (Twenty-five stations fell within a 2-mile POD radius.) Original LORAN positions of all stations are still available. At each station, 120 meter dive lines were surveyed for dispersion and abundance of SAV.

The survey, found that most stations west of- the 1983-84 study area contained SAV. SAV (especially sparse, macroalgae) was also found at areas mapped as barren in the earlier studies. Caulerpa species were ubiquitous, but other rhizophytic algae were more common in the southern half of the survey area. Overall, there were declines in SAV richness and cover toward the north and toward the west, within the 1986 survey area. Extensive areas of drift and lithophytic Sargassum were also observed.

#### Rationale

The major questions to be answered by the monitoring plan were:

- **1)** Are barren areas being colonized by SAV?
- 2) Are existing areas of SAV expanding?

To answer Question **1.,** it was necessary to design and implement a robust survey program in barren areas. To answer Question 2. selected SAV beds were surveyed at a very fine scale and results were compared between years.

Professional aerial photography was to be used to backstop the field measurements. We did not recommend using aerial imagery as a primary source of **SAV** dispersion data because past experience has shown that turbidity, color, tide. sea surface conditions, and weather are significant impediments to successful photography at this site. On the other hand, when it is successful, aerial photography can reveal changes in SAV that fixed-station methods might miss. Consequently, we sought to fly the site and examine each year's new imagery prior to commencing field work, where possible.

Important corollary questions included:

A.

3) Changes in SAV cover outside of the designated study area (control sites);

4) Changes in the relative abundance of macroalgae, compared to seagrasses: and

5) Changes in the biomass or productivity of existing SAV beds.

We addressed Question 3 by occupying barren and vegetated sites in control sites, and by including these areas in the flight lines for aerial photography. Where possible, control stations were selected at a variety of depths comparable to stations within the 2-mile POD radius.

We addressed Question 4 by measuring percent cover by species. and percent barren area, at stations within the SAV beds selected for more intensive surveys.

Changes in SAV biomass or productivity (Question 5) were determined by sampling the intensive survey beds during August of each year. The 316 Demonstration Study reported a strong dependence of variation in these parameters, on time. Seagrass biomass and productivity during the Fall are transitional between maxima in August and September, and minima in December and January. Consequently, difficulty was expected in identifying statistically significant differences between years. using November data. Interannual differences are particularly difficult to detect in beds of mixed species, which are more common than single-species beds near Crystal River Station.

This report summarizes findings for barren area surveys. "perimeter" studies at intensive SAV beds, and the August 1994-95 condition assessment.

#### METHODS

#### Positioning

Several independent systems were employed. Approximate station locations were mapped onto charts carried in the field, to depict the orientation of a station to creeks, islands, day marks, levees, and other land marks. LORAN and GPS coordinates of all stations and transects, measured in 1993 and 1994, were also taken into the field. As needed, the end points of transects that were marked on land or in marshes with steel bars, stones. colored paint, or other permanent material were replaced.

In 1995, transect end points and station locations were again measured using a Voyager LORAN Navigator and a Magellan NAVPRO global positioning system. Electronic positions also were measured for NOS benchmarks at. the mouth of the discharge canal, and at the U.S. Geological Survey "Knott" benchmark on Drum Island. Analysis of the electronic data indicates high field accuracy (reproducibility) but relatively low map precision (see Discussion).

#### Barren Area Transects

Barren area transects established in 1993 were visited in October 1994 and October 1995. As shown in Figure 2, most effort was directed to Basins 1, 2 and **3,** with some effort in the areas of Basins 4 and **5.** closest to the POD (e.g, inside the 2-mile radius).

Transects- IN, 1W and 2W covered Basin 1, the shallowest basin in the study area (-0.3 m relative to chart datum). Transects crossed level bottom comprised of variously-sized sediment overlying an irregular limestone platform. Sediments to the north 'and east, near Juncus marshes, have an organic component found lacking in sediments to the west and south, where shelly sands dominate. This basin is utilized heavily by the west indian manatee.

Basin 2 is crossed by Transects 3W, 4W, and the northern half of 5W. Basin 2 is deeper than Basin **I** (mean depth -0.9 m) and has minor tidal channels as deep as 1.8 m. Basin 2 transects run close by or over oyster reefs and

mapped SAV beds 1, 6 and 7. Sediments are heterogeneous, and bare limestone occurs on Transects 4W and 5W. The influence of Withlacoochee River discharge is evident in this basin.

Basin 3 is crossed by Transects 6W through lOW. This circular basin has a bowl-shaped profile, deepest near the center **(-1.9** *m).* The basin-is ringed by oyster reefs to the east and west, and by the Intake Canal Levee to the south. Perimeter beds 14 and 15 are located on 2 shelly shoals that have accumulated atop limestone steppes within the basin. This basin presents the most exposed limestone bottom in the study area, as well as the most sediment with a high silt and mud content. Tidal currents are strong near Transect lOW (adjacent to Dog Head Reef).

Basin 4 contains 2 transects, 2N and 11W. The transects begin near ends of the middle bar in the English Shoals, and meet in waters 2.1 m deep. This bottom is shelly and supports Caulerpa, calcareous algae, and the sea-whip. Leptogorgia. Basin 5 has 1 transect, 12W, that begins on the levee and ends in 2.5 m of water. Solitary corals are present in this basin, which opens directly to the Gulf of Mexico.

Transects lOW, 12 W, and 2N are beyond the 2 mile POD radius, and are treated as background or control sites. Another control site, Transect 13W, lies between the Barge Canal and Withlacoochee River channel. Transect 13W is in 2 m of water over muddy sand. Appendix Table I describes all transect locations.

Barren areas were surveyed by a diver towed behind a shallow draft vessel. Most transects ran due north or south to pre-determined landmarks. For long transects, tows followed transect lines marked in advance with temporary buoys. Buoys marked end points and way points, as needed. Beginning and end points were permanently positioned and marked. Where needed, tows were made into the current to reduce drift.

If the diver encountered seagrass or rhizophytic algae in barren areas the vessel stopped and marked the site(s). The immediate area was reconnoitered to determine the extent of SAV. If it corresponded to a previously-mapped SAV bed, it was recorded as "mapped" and was discounted as barren area. If new. the area, centroid position, species composition. and percent cover (see below) of the SAV was to be recorded, unless the vegetation was found to be Sarqassum attached to rock outcrops. SAV markers were then recovered. and the survey of the transect continued.

Yearly barren area transect surveys were begun on November **9,** 1993, October 13, 1994, and October 16, 1995.

#### Intensive SAV BED Surveys

In October 1994, GPS and LORAN coordinates and compass sightings were used to relocate the seagrass beds selected for study. All beds were marked by crab trap buoys anchored with screw-in tie down anchors to facilitate site recovery in 1995.

Within each bed, the position of a "center" marker was determined in 1993 by GPS, LORAN, and compass bearings. Center markers are hemispherical concrete parking lot markers. Each marker was painted with blue anti-fouling paint and anchored to the bottom with screw-in anchors. Center markers were tied to the anchors with 1" diameter nylon rope.

Edges of all 15 sites were marked during November 1993 in order to determine whether the seagrass beds expanded, contracted, or remain unchanged during the duration of the three year study.

Seagrass bed edges were marked with short (<1.0 m) sections of 3/8" steel reinforcement rods driven into the bottom with a small sledge hammer. Each steel stake was allowed to extend about 10 cm upward from the sediment surface. Seagrass bed edges were usually very easy to define, based on the sharp delineations between bare bottom and vegetated bottom.

**A** surveyor's tape was strung out along the set of edge markers at each site. In 1993, distances between edge markers and the distance from the center marker to each edge marker were recorded.

In 1994, bed markers were found by wading, snorkeling, or pulling a weighted polypropylene line across the bottom. Center markers and edge markers were relocated or replaced as needed. The majority of markers was relocated, so that only a few needed to be replaced. PVC poles were installed next to each edge marker to simplify working in turbid water. The distance of the actual SAV bed edge was tape-measured from the edge marker. Seaward changes were recorded as expansions. Changes toward the central bed marker were recorded as contractions.

The same methods were used to re-locate bed markers in August and October 1995 and the same measurements from edge markers and the center stone were repeated. All markers, including the center stone and bed edge stakes, were missing at Station 4. All other sites were found although various numbers of stakes were missing at several of the 14 re-located sites.

#### Physical Features

To document that bottom profiles or sediment depths did not vary so much near the edges of SAV beds that future lateral growth might be inhibited, additional data were collected at each site in 1993. These measurements were repeated in October 1995 to follow possible changes in physical. characteristics of the bottom. Water depth and sediment thickness were measured on the edge of each SAV bed and at 1.0 and 2.0 m distances into the barren zone. A marked measuring stick was used to measure water depth. Sediment thickness was determined by pushing a 1.5 m long. 3/8" diameter iron rod into the bottom. The rod was pushed in to its full length or to the point of refusal. The rod was then withdrawn and the depth of penetration was measured. Measurements of each type were made adjacent to alternate stake markers along the edges of each of the 15 seagrass beds.

#### Seagrass Observations

In 1993, 1994, and 1995 the percentage of bottom covered by SAV on the edge of each bed (from 0.0 to 1.0 m into each bed) and deeper into the bed (at a distance of 2.0 to 3.0 m) was measured. Ten 1.0  $m^2$  quadrat-based estimates of bottom cover were taken along the vegetated edge of each SAV bed: The quadrats were positioned on the vegetated side of a randomly selected subset of the 15 edge markers at each site. Ten  $1.0 \text{ m}^2$  additional cover estimates were made by flipping the quadrat frame over twice away from the perimeter of each seagrass bed.

Subdivisions (100 cm2) of the 1.0 m2 quadrat were used as the units for the cover estimates. SAV coverage was determined by counting the number of units in which various species of SAV were actually rooted. A barren square was defined as being devoid of any rooted vegetation. Seagrass blades from plants rooted in other units were not counted as cover in the otherwise completely barren units. Four seagrasses (Halodule, Syringodium, Thalassia, and Halophila) were encountered in the study sites. Two species of the rhizophytic algal genus. Caulerpa. were found at several of the sites.

Divers recorded data on slates and the data were transferred to log books for later use.

#### SAV Condition

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Condition was defined as **SAV** shoot count, above-ground biomass,.a~d  productivity. Methods and effort followed the 316 Demonstration Study (Mattson et **al. ,19861)** with some variations as noted below. SAV condition was measured at the 15 intensive beds that are used for perimeter measurements in the 1993-95 monitoring program.

At each station. 6 samples for biomass of seagrasses and rhizophytic macroalgae were collected with a 25x25 cm sampler. The sampler was a PVC frame partially covered by a dive bag. Macrophytes clipped at the sediment surface floated into the upturned bag, which was labelled and'closed. Its contents were then transferred to a labelled plastic bag and stored on ice. Contents of 6 samples were sorted into seagrasses (by species) and algae (pooled). Sorted samples were dried to constant Weight at **1050** C and weighed.

Seagrass productivity was determined as 14 day regrowth. Six clip rings were deployed at each seagrass bed study site. Losses of one or two rings occurred between deployment and retrieval at a few sites. At least 4. and usually 5 or **6.,** replicate measurements were made in each bed, using 11.3 cm diameter clip rings for Halodule, or 16.7 cm diameter clip rings for other seagrasses. After clip rings were installed, all SAV was clipped level with the surface of the ring, and discarded. Two weeks later, new growth was harvested, sorted, preserved, and labelled. Samples were dried to constant weight at 105° C and weighed. Seagrass shoot densities were .measured by counting the shoots collected in the clip rings after 14 days of regrowth.

**<sup>1/</sup>** Mattson, R., J.A. Derrenbacker, Jr. and R.R. Lewis. 1986. Effects of thermal addition from the Crystal River generating complex on the submerged macrophytic communities in Crystal Bay, Florida, **pp. 11-67** in K. Mahadevan et al. (eds.). Proceedings, Southeastern Workshop on Aquatic Ecological Effects of Power Generation, Mote Marine Laboratory Technical Report Number 124. Sarasota FL.

#### Seagrass Bed Designations

Seagrass bed designations were changed for the final report (Figure 3) in order to indicate basin locations and dominant vegetation types. Codes for the new groupings are given in Table **1.** Area I-HW, for example, includes the nearly monospecific Halodule beds in Basin I. Area IV-Mix beds contain more than one species of seagrass and algae. Figures for all seagrass bed observations are arranged within each group based on distances from the point of discharge (POD). In Areas I-HW and II-HW and at Station 13 this is a straight-line distance from the POD to the center marker at each station. For all other stations distances were measured from the POD to the tip of the southern discharge dike and then to the station centers.

#### RESULTS

All data collected from the 1995 sampling effort appear in the tables and appendix tables that follow. Data from 1993 and 1994 were included for comparison to the 1995 data.

BARREN AREA STUDIES

#### Transect Completeness

All transects were surveyed in 1993. In 1994, the Withlacoochee control transect (13W) was not run due to the riverine discharge of highly colored waters. In 1995. the northern half of the Basin 5 control transect (12W) was not surveyed due to a layer of mineral turbidity near the bottom. The shallower, southern half of this transect was surveyed. Overall completeness by transect-effort for the 3 year study was 97%.

#### Barren Area Transects in 1994

Three SAV beds were encountered in 1994 that were not seen when the transects were established in 1993 (Table 2; Figure 2). Two were Halodule

beds and the third was a mixed Halodule-Syringodium bed with small amounts of the green alga. Caulerpa.

One of the "new" beds was found on Transect **1N,** which is Basin **1.** It was a small (7x10 m), sparse (5% mean cover) Halodule bed with short (<5 cm) blades. The bed was growing in a silty sand underlain by rock... Many large (10-20 cm) burrows were found in the rock near the bed and elsewhere on the Basin **1** flats crossed by Transects **IN.** 1W and 2W. The burrows were not seen in 1993.

Another Halodule bed was found on Transect 3W. in Basin 2. The bed covered 40 m of transect on flats southwest of Thumb Island. The north end of the bed was characterized by sparse calcareous green algae and Halodule was the principal SAV at the bed's southern; end. Average percent cover of Halodule near the south end of the bed was 48%.

A third novel bed was found on Transect 5W, which crosses from Basin 2 into Basin 3. The bed was found in the Basin 2 portion of the transect, south of Drum Island. The bed was a mixture of small, dense patches-of either Caulerpa (4% mean cover) or Halodule (14% mean cover), with the two sometimes combined. Syringodium was present but rare (30% cover in 1 of 10 replicates.

#### Barren Area Transects in 1995

In 1995. four SAV beds were encountered in 1994 that were not seen when the transects were established in 1993 (Table 3). Three of the 1995 beds were not encountered in 1994. All- of the new beds in 1995 were in Basins,1 and 2, and were dominated by Halodule.

The smallest of the new beds was found on Transect 1W, in Basin 1. It was a irregular (1x1 m), sparse (<5% mean cover, estimated) Halodule bed with short (<5 cm) blades. The bed was growing in-a silty sand.

Another Halodule bed was found on Transect 3W- in Basin 2. The bed covered 35 m of transect on flats northeast of Thumb Island. The bed covered 12 m. east to west. Average percent cover of Halodule near the center of the bed was 72%. and a single Halophila rosette was found in one quadrat.

The third new bed in 1995 was on Transect 4W (Basin 2), close by the southeast corner of Drum Island and an adjacent oyster reef. The bed measured 110 m on a north-south axis. Its east-west borders were irregular and the fringes were dissected by courses of barren bottom, but the eastwest width of the bed at its center was 22 m. Halodule was the dominant species (34% mean cover) although 1 quadrat contained 6% Halophila and 2% Caulerpa.

The fourth bed was found on Transect 5W, which crosses from Basin 2 into Basin 3. The bed was found in the Basin 2 portion of the transect, south of Drum Island, at the site of its first discovery in 1994. In 1995 the bed was dominated by Syrinqodium (17% mean cover) with a trace of Caulerpa. This condition differs from 1994, when the bed was a mixture of small, dense patches of either Caulerpa (4% mean cover) or Halodule (14% mean cover). with the two sometimes combined. Syringodium was present in 1994 but rare (30% cover in 1 of 10 replicates).

Finally, small and sparse amounts of new vegetation were encountered on the southern reaches of Transects 6W and 9W, in Basin 3. On Transect 6W, tufts of Syrinoodium were found among Caulerpa and Sargassum. Caulerpa, alone, was crossed by Transect 9W.

#### Net SAV Changes in Barren Areas, 1993 - 1995

In 1993, barren area transects encountered few SAV beds, and these were previously known. The 1993 survey established that most of Basins **1-3** were barren of seagrasses. By 1994, 3 new beds had developed, all north of the Discharge Canal. Two of the 1994 beds could not be found in 1995, but 3 other beds were discovered. These also were north of the Discharge Canal.

The gross increase in new seagrass areas during the 3 year survey period was 6 beds. Two failed to persist to 1995. Compared to 1993 conditions. 4 new beds were added to Basins 1 and 2. There were, in general, no signs of bed development in the middle or southern areas of the 2 basins closest to the POD. However, one new 1994 Halodule bed on Transect **1W** was only a few hundred meters from the POD. There was some minor coverage of new seagrass and rhizophytic algae in the southern part of Basin 3.

#### Other Changes Observed-on Barren Area Transects

In 1994, many large (10-20 cm) burrows were found in exposed rock and in sand on the Basin 1 flats crossed by Transects 1N, 1W and 2W. The burrows were not seen in 1993, or in 1995. A similar appearance in 1994, of solitary sponges and tunicates, was observed in Basin 3 (Transects 6W and 7W). These filter feeding animals were abundant in deeper Basin 3 waters, but were absent in 1995.

#### SEAGRASS BED INTENSIVE STUDIES

General characteristics, derived from field observations made during the 3 year duration of this project, of each of the 15 seagrass stations included in the intensive studies are described in Table 4. Table **I** lists the GPS and LORAN determined latitudes and longitudes of the center markers at each of the 15 seagrass stations. The seagrass species present at. a site seemed to be highly dependent on the site's degree of exposure to the open Gulf, turbidity at each site, and on sediment thickness as judged from perceptions based on walking across each seagrass bed. In general Halodule was found adiacent to Juncus marshes and Syringodium was found in open bays adjacent to protective offshore oyster bars.

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#### Physical Features

Measurements of water depth at the marked edges of the seagrass beds and at 1.0 and 2.0 m beyond the edges (Figures 4 to **8:** Appendix Table II) indicated gradually sloping bottoms at all stations in Area 1-HW, in Area II-HW. in Area III-SF, and in Area V-SF. Stations 14 and 13 in Area IV-Mix contours were less uniform with more rapid changes in depth from the perimeter to 2 m outside of each bed.

In general there was no evidence that changes in bottom topography limited seagrass growth at any of the study sites.

Sediment depth profiles (Figures 9 to **13:** Appendix Table II) show an interesting pattern in that most Halodule wrightii beds are situated on soft mud banks with sediment depths reaching 100 cm at 5 of the. 6 Halodule beds

(Figures 9 and 10). Station 3 was an exception to this pattern. At Station 3 soft sediments were less deep because the site runs closely parallel to an oyster bar on its shoreward side. Limestone rock outcroppings were also scattered throughout this bed.

Syrinqodium filiforme beds were typically found rooted in shallow-sediment deposits over rocky substrata (Figures 11 and 13). Surface soft sediment layers rarely reached 100 cm depth with the exception of Station **10.**

The mixed species beds (Figure 12) were underlain by a complex mosaic of shallow rock and deep soft sediments. Sediments at Station 14 and 15 were soft while rock was encountered at less than 20 cm at Station 15. All of the Syringodium beds seemed to be limited by exposed rock along at least parts of their borders.

#### Seaqrass Bed Expansion and Contraction

Mean changes in grass bed edge positions ranged from -2.06 m to +6.81 **m.** Standard deviations usually exceeded means because considerable variation was measured at each site. All data for this effort are presented in Appendix Table III. In general more beds expanded or remained unchanged at distances greater than 1.6 miles from the. POD while more beds contracted at locations closer to the POD. All bed edge markers and the center stone were lost at Station 4 during the summer of 1995.

#### Area-wide Bed Expansions

,No completely consistent basin-wide patterns were seen with the exception of Area IV-Mix where all beds expanded from 1993 to 1995 (Table 5: Figure 14). In this area, mean bed expansion ranged from 0.58 to 2.07 m. Stations in all other areas showed a mix of expansion and contraction over the study period. Trends toward expansion seen in 1994 were sometimes drastically reversed by 1995. Two of the three stations in this area consistently expanded from 1993 to 1994. Station 13 remained unchanged in 1994 but expanded by 1995. Stations in this group range from 1.77 to 2.05 miles from the POD.

#### Bed Changes in Other Areas

Five of the remaining 11 intensively studied SAV beds had positive growth along their margins since 1993, based on the mean change observed at 10 to 16 reference markers per bed (Table,5). Halodule beds in Area I-HW (Figure 15) expanded at two stations, following the pattern seen between 1993 to 1994, and contracted at one station. The I-HW stations are located within **0,.63** to 0.73 statute miles of the point of discharge (POD).

Halodule beds in Area II-HW (Figure 16) expanded at Station 7 and contracted at Stations **5** and 6 (Table 5). The grassbed at Station **5** virtually disappeared as will be described in later sections of this report. Grassbeds in this area range from 1.23 to 1.67 statute miles from the POD. Station **5** is the most distant from the POD of these three stations.

Syringodium beds in Areas III-SF (Figure 17) and V-SF (Figure 18) expanded at two stations, remained unchanged at two stations, and contracted at one station. No distance to edge measurements were possible in 1995 at Station 4 because all markers were lost by the time of the 1995 visits. Area III-SF stations range from 1.63 to 1.82 miles to the POD while Area V-SF stations are located from 2.25 to 2.95 miles from the POD.

#### Percent Cover

The majority of cases in 1993. 1994, and 1995 were such that percent cover measurements were made on algae-free SAV beds (Appendix Table IV). 'Although algae were present in some cases, the cover and changes in cover of seagrass generally represent the same values as data for "total vegetation".

Percent coverage by all vegetation in area I-HW decreased from a high of 86.1% in 1993 to a low of 56.4% in 1995. Decreases of the same approximate magnitude were seen in all other areas from 1993 to 1995 with the exception of area V-SF (Table 6). A large decrease in percent coverage occurred in these areas between August 1995 and October 1995.

All measurements of percent cover from 1993 to 1995 were combined to produce a series of figures (Figures 19 to 25) which show how bottom coverage by individual seagrass species, algae. and total vegetation (SAV) changed from year to year.

#### Halodule wrightii

Halodule followed similar patterns in bed edges and interiors at each of the nine stations where this seagrass was abundant. All but one of these stations showed decreased coverages on their perimeters and within the beds' interiors from 1993 to 1995. The patterns followed between 1994.and 1995 show a mixture of changes that included both increased and decreased coverage. Halodule (Figure 19) percent coverage fell from nearly **90%** in 1993-to less than 10% in 1995 at Station 5 and to 0% at Station 8. Station 5 changed from a nearly uniform carpet of Halodule to a mud flat with only a few tufts of living grass while Station 8 changed from a mixed species bed to a Syringodium bed. The changes seen at other stations were much less pronounced.

#### Syringodium filiforme

Syringodium (Figure 20) coverage remained approximately constant or increased at stations where it was the only seagrass species. Syringodium increased coverage at Station 8 from 0% coverage in 1993 to much higher levels in 1995 as described above. Stations 9. 10, and 11 (in group V-SF), all control stations, showed no consistent patterns of change. Syringodium within bed interiors was usually more dense than on bed perimeters but interior percent coverages paralleled perimeter fluctuations at most stations.

#### Halophila engelmannii

Halophila (Figure 21), never abundant, virtually disappeared at all 15 stations by October 1995. It was present in August 1995 biomass samples and in quadrat surveys for percent cover at 4 sites. Its greatest percent coverage, nearly 25% within perimeter quadrats, was seen at Station **9.** south of the intake canal, in 1994. By 1995 all traces of this species disappeared. It was never found at 7 stations and never exceeded 10% coverage at the remaining 7 sites.

#### Thalassia testudinum

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Thalassia (Figure 22) was only found within Area IV-Mix's three stations. Its coverage fluctuated from year to year in patterns unique to each of the three stations.

#### Total Seagrass Coverage

Total seagrass coverage (Figure 23) decreased at 9 of the 15 grassbed station study sites. increased at 2 stations, and remained approximately constant at 4 stations. The largest decline in coverage, from 80% to 3% coverage, was seen at Station **5.** Station 3 also showed a large .drop in coverage from 1993 to 1994 but recovered some of the loss by October 1995.

#### Attached Algae

Attached algae (Figure 24), usually Caulerpa prolifera or C. mexicana, were abundant at only 3 of the 15 stations. No long-term trends were seen at these stations.

#### Total SAV Coverage

Trends in total vegetation coverage (Figure 25) closely followed the sitespecific patterns seen in Figure 23 (total seagrass coverage) because of the sporadic algal coverage. Completely barren bottom, with no seagrass or algae for interiors and perimeters of the 15 seagrass stations, can be read in Figure 25 as the white space above the cross-hatched bars. Crosshatching represents the area covered by SAV. Interiors and exteriors of most sites were very similar in the percent of bottom area covered by SAV.

The largest decrease in SAV coverage was seen at Station 5. This decrease represents the loss of nearly all of the Halodule found at the station in 1993.

#### Biomass

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Biomass was evaluated for each seagrass species, all seagrass, and all vegetation (Appendix Table V: Table 7).

#### Halodule wrightii

Halodule biomass declined at 7 of the 12 stations where it was found in 1994 (Figure 26). A general trend of increasing biomass with increased distance from the POD can be seen- in Areas I-HW and II-HW with the exception of
Station 5. Halodule disappeared completely in the clip box samples taken at Stations 8 and 12 by 1995. It was replaced by Syringodium.

## Syrinqodium filiforme

Syringodium was never collected in Areas I-HW or in II-HW (Figure<sub>-27)</sub>. Syringodium biomass declined at all 7 stations where it was seen in 1994. The declines were most pronounced in Area V-SF and at Station 12 in Area III-SF. The Area V-SF stations were considered to be controls because Stations 9 and **10** are located south of the intake canal (Figure 3). Station 11 is between the intake and discharge canals well behind the last series of oyster bars in Rocky Cove.

## Halophila enqelmannii

Halophila occurred sporadically at 7 stations over the 2 years in which biomass was monitored (Figure 28).' It never occurred in area I-HW but it was collected in all other areas but not at all stations.

### Thalassia testudinum

Thalassia occurred in the clip box samples at only 2 stations (Figure 29). It was more abundant in 1994 than in 1995 at both of these stations.

## Total Seagrass Biomass

Combining the biomass of all seagrass species obscured the biomass-density distribution patterns seen for individual species biomass (Figure 30), although it is evident that stations closest to the POD had much lower mean biomass values than more distant stations. Mean seagrass biomass values for the six stations closest to the POD were considerably lower than mean biomass values for the three more distant stations (9,11, and 12).

Seagrass biomass (Figure 30) declined at 12 of the 15 seagrass stations from 1994 to 1995. The largest declines were seen at Stations 11 and 12. Small increases in seagrass biomass were seen at Stations 6 and 7 in Basin II. Biomass also increased at Station 14. The overall decline in seagrass biomass was seen both at hot-water impacted and at control stations and was not seagrass species specific.

## Attached Algal Biomass

Attached algal biomass (Figure 31) was distributed across sites in similar patterns in 1994 and 1995. The two stations where algal biomass was greatest in 1994 showed a decline in biomass in 1995.

## Total SAV Biomass

All vegetation (seagrass plus rhizophytic macroalgae) biomass accentuated the spatial pattern seen for all seagrass species combined (Figure 32). Distant stations north of the Intake Canal had greater mean biomass values than stations closer to the POD., due largely to the increased abundance of macroalgae.

#### Shoot Density

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Mean numbers of Halodule shoots per square meter (Table 8) were generally greater in 1995 at all sites where this seagrass was collected in 1994 (Figure 33). The only exception was Station 8 where Halodule disappeared. Syringodium (Figure 34) shoot densities increased greatly in III-SF from 1994 but showed smaller changes in area V-SF. Shoot density data are presented in Appendix Table VI.

## Productivity

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Clip data (Table **8:** Appendix Table VI) were normalized for regrowth period and sample size to calculate productivity as mg dry weight per square meter per day.

Halodule productivity increased in areas I-HW and II-HW from 1994 to 1995 (Figure 35). All Halodule disappeared at Station 8. Halodule in area IV-Mix beds exceeded 1994 growth rates at two of the three stations. The growth rate increases seen in Areas I-HW and II-HW suggest that presumed declines in water temperature following the start-up of the helper cooling towers, may have been a factor.

Syringodium growth was also accelerated from 1994 to 1995 in area III-SF (Figure 36). Growth rate differences in area V-SF, at distances exceeding 2.2 miles from the POD, were not as noticeable between years.

### DISCUSSION

### Photography

Aerial photography scheduled for 1993 was not completed until spring of 1994 because of unsuitable weather and water conditions. Usefulness of 1994 images was marginal due to turbidity fronts in Basins **I** and 2. equivalent to the study area within a 2 mile POD radius., Photography authorized for fall 1994 was not completed despite extended readiness through 1995. Flight conditions were hampered during winter 1994-95, and unusual tropical storm conditions reduced water clarity during summer and fall, 1995.

Conditions suited for aerial photography of SAV in the vicinity of the FPC power station are less common than elsewhere on the west Florida coast. For example, aerial photography of SAV during favorable conditions in Tampa Bay, by Geonex for the Southwest Florida Water Management District, prompted reconnaissance flights to Crystal River. Transparency at Crystal River was judged unsuitable during the same week that optimal conditions existed in Tampa Bay.

Our plans for field sampling were informed by the record of poor conditions for aerial photography at the site. Lack of contemporaneous aerial photographs prevented the production of digitized SAV maps but did not hamper our ability to monitor barren and vegetated areas throughout the study area. Future attempts at aerial photography should be made, with or without collateral field sampling, as opportunities arise.

### Weather in 1995

Effects of 2 hurricanes and a tropical storm were felt along the coasts of Citrus and Levy counties. Storm surges completely inundated coastal Juncus marshes adjacent to the study area. Organic marsh sediments were deposited along the coastal marsh-front -- northern and eastern edges of Basins 1 and 2 were fringed with subtidal deposits of fine organic matter, from August through October. 1995. Inorganic sands also were reworked in parts of every basin. Sand and shell was eroded from levees and islands, and deposited along intertidal oyster reefs.

Rainfall and freshwater (Withlacoochee River) discharge also were above average during summer 1995, although 12 month totals matched long-term averages (SWFWMD, 1995). Highly colored water from the Withlacoochee River, Barge Canal. and coastal runoff 'reduced local transparency to less than 0.5 m during low tides, and colored freshwater plumes were discernable 6 km from shore. Compared to 1993 and 1994 survey periods, August and October 1995 had more wind, more westerly onshore wind. rougher seas, and reduced visibility in all basins.

Halophila engelmannii 's disappearance, from August 1995 to October 1995, was probably due to reduced salinities from rainfall and freshwater discharges throughout the study area. Halophila is reported to discolor and to eventually die when exposed to salinities below 10  $ppt^2$ .

Growth rates (0.15 to 0.91 g dry weight m<sup>2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>) determined for Halodule during 1995 within the study site fall into the range of growth rates (0.1 g in January to **1.7** g dry weight m'2 **d-')** reported from the Laguna Madre. Texas<sup>3</sup>. In 1994 several of the growth rate determinations for this species fell below this range. Production rates measured at station 5 in Area II-HW and station 3 in Area I-HW, during August 1994, were 0.073 and 0.083 g dry weight m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The considerable increase in production rates seen at sites closest to the POD niay have been due to presumably decreased water temperatures at the'POD. The highest shoot production rates in the Laguna Madre study occurred when water temperatures ranged from 28 to 29°C. Temperatures above and below that level caused decreased shoot production rates.

### Principal Findinqs

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Based on data from 1993, 1994, and 1995, the following points are offered.

1. "New" SAV beds appeared along barren-area transects.

<sup>2</sup>Dawes, C.. M. Chan, R. Chinn, E.W. Koch. A. Lazar. and D. Tomasko (1987). Proximate composition, photosynthetic and respiratory responses of the seagrass Halophila engelmannii from Florida. Aquat. Bot., 27: 195-201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Tomasko, D.A. and K.H. Dunton (1995). Primary productivity in Halodule wrightii: a comparison of techniques based on daily carbon budgets. Estuaries **18:** 271-278.

Three beds were found in 1994 that were not seen in 1993. Two were small Halodule beds in relatively close proximity (Basins 1 and 2) to the point of discharge. The apparent recruitment of beds into barren areas could have been an artifact of sampling dates (November-December 1993 versus October 1994). especially for the multiple species bed' on Transect 5 near Drum Island. Beds on transects closer to the point of discharge are more likely to be genuine additions, because the tidal' flats in that area are shallow, easily surveyed, and frequently visited.

In 1995. four SAV beds were encountered in 1994 that were not seen when the transects were established in 1993. Three of the 1995 beds were not encountered in 1994. All of the new beds in 1995 were in Basins 1 and 2. and were dominated by Halodule. The largest new bed (110 m by 22 m) in 1995 was on Transect 4W (Basin 2), near Drum Island. Another bed found near Drum Island in 1994 was found again in 1995. In 1995 the bed was dominated by Syringodium with a trace of Caulerpa. which condition differs from 1994 when the bed was a mixture of small, dense patches of either Caulerpa or Halodule.

2. Recruitment of new beds into barren areas has not been extensive.

During the 3 years of monitoring, there was no evidence that SAV was colonizing extensive areas of barren sediment. All of the new beds were found in the northern parts of Basins 1 and 2. north of the discharge canal. In the 3 years of this study, no new beds were found in any part of Basin **3,** although in 1995 small and sparse amounts of new vegetation were encountered on the southern reaches of Transects 6W (tufts of Svrinqodium in Caulerpa and Saraassum) and 9W (Caulerpa only). Historical data indicate that losses of SAV along the southern side of Basin 3 were considerable.

# 3. All of the new beds have formed north of the POD, in Basins **1** and *2.*

Two of the new beds did not persist, but their appearance conformed with locations of other new beds. Without data on abiotic parameters we cannot attribute this pattern to physical or chemical gradients across the study area. It can be noted, however, that all of the new beds were in the vicinity of stable, persistent beds, and tidal marshes.

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4. The seaward edges of **SAV** beds have expanded at 7 of 15 **SAV** stations. Expansion was seen at 13 of the 15 beds through 1994. **All** SAV beds in Area IV-Mix expanded over the study period. No basin-wide contractions of seagrass beds were seen from 1993 to 1995. SAV beds in Areas I-HW and II-HW, in the areas most strongly influenced by thermal discharges, expanded at 3 stations and contracted at 3 stations. Stations in Areas III-SE and V-SF expanded at 2 sites, contracted at **I** site, and remained unchanged at *2,* sites.

5. Patterns of change in percent cover, from 1993 to 1995, showed decreased coverages **(by** total vegetation) at 10 of 15 sites. Five of the six Halodule beds in Areas I-HW and II-HW declined in coverage by total vegetation. Syringodium beds in Areas III-SF and V-SF showed increased coverage at 3 of 6 sites, decreased coverage at 2 sites. and no change at one site.

6. Biomass distribution patterns showed a general decline from 1993 to 1995 at **10** of 15 sites irrespective of distance from the POD.

7. Shoot densities increased **by 1995** for Halodule at 8 of the 10 stations where it was present in 1994. Syringodium shoot densities increased by 1995 at 4 of 6 stations where it was seen in 1994.

8. **SAV** production rates showed large rate increases from 1994 to 1995 in Areas I-HW. II-HW, and III-SE. All of these sites are within the path of historical thermal discharges from the POD. Smaller production increases were. measured at stations in. Areas IV-Mix and Area V-SF. A decrease in discharge water temperatures may explain part of the increased growth rates seen near the POD, and decreased transparency during the summer of 1995 may also have been a factor.

## CONCLUSIONS

Visits in 1994 and 1995 to transects and seagrass beds selected for monitoring in 1993 revealed spatial as well as temporal patterns in the distribution of sea grasses and rhizophytic algae. Most patterns depicted a system of bed recruitment and expansion that promoted persistence, and for several parameters (Table **9),** improvements in SAV cover and condition during the three years. Six new beds appeared in barren areas, and 3 persisted

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into 1995. .More than half of the intensively monitored beds had net increases in perimeter. Until the wet summer of 1995, 8 of 15 beds also increased with respect to cover.

Halodule and Syringodium were the dominant seagrass species in the vicinity of the study area. Halophila. and to a lesser extent. Thalassia. were affected adversely by the wet summer, causing shifts in species dominance within beds, and some declines in percent cover. Halodule demonstrated the greatest potential for recruitment into barren areas, having twice colonized Basin **1.** the basin closes to the point of thermal discharge.

No abiotic parameters were measured in this program, so it is not possible to assign causes for the SAV changes observed during the past 3 years. Changes in transects and beds within the 2 mile POD radius were mirrored by changes at more distant sites, indicating the extent of the 1995 wet season on the region, as well as the study area. Biomass was lower and productivity was higher in 1995, than in 1994, consistent with effects of storms and heavy rains.



Station codes and locations for all seagrass bed intensive studies. The dominant seagrass species is listed Table 1. for each station.

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\* Located south of the intake canal levees.

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Table 2. SAV beds found in October 1994 on 1993 barren area transects.

	Bed 1	Bed 2	Bed 3
Transect No.	1N.	3W	5W
Basin No. <b>LORAN</b>		2	2/3
45 -	229.16	236.00	240.85
$62 -$	880.75 POD	885.49 Thumb I.	888.81 Drum I.
Near to: Length, $m$		40	30
Max. Width, m	10	19	31
Mean % Cover			
Halodule	5	48	14
<u>Syringodium</u>			3
<u>Caulerpa</u>	0		4
Bare	95	52	85
N	10	9	10

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Table 3. SAV beds found in October 1995 on 1993 barren area transects.

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Table 4. Brief descriptions of the 15 seagrass stations included in seagrass bed intensive surveys.

Area I-HW Stations:

1) Adjacent to saltmarsh (Juncus sp); very soft bottom; Halodule was only species present: offshore area bordered by oyster bars at varying distances. from the study site.

2) same as above

3) same as above except that bottom was rocky in some areas; oyster bar limits grassbed growth on shoreward side; station closest to end of discharge canal

### Area II-HW Stations:

5) Saltmarsh bordered by well developed oyster bar at this site. Halodule grassbed reduced, to very widely dispersed, small clumps and patches.

6) Site in middle of small embayment away from Juncus marsh; bed bordered by oyster bar on one side.

7) Same as #6 except that original grassbed has grown and merged with other grassbeds. Thalassia seen in the area where the grassbeds merged. Very soft bottom except along edge of oyster bar.

### Area III-SF Stations:

4) Bed on seaward edge of Rocky Cove oyster bars. Very exposed to wind and waves: hard bottom with Sargassum attached to rocky bottom at the seaward edge of the seagrass beds. Lost. all station markers in 1995. Observations on bottom cover, productivity, biomass all done within GPS and LORAN determined station boundaries

8) Syringodium bed on seaward edge of Rocky Cove oyster bars: very exposed to wind and waves; hard bottom with Sargassum attached to rocky bottom at the seaward edge of the seagrass beds.

12) Syringodium in area between parallel oyster bars at south side of Rocky Cove; good current flow throughout area as tides change.

#### Area IV-Mix Stations:

13) Very mixed mosaic of seagrasses (<u>Thalassia/ Syringodium/ Halophila</u> Halodule) with Caulerpa mexicana and C. prolifera. Oyster bar to west protects this site from heavy chop and waves.

14) Site located on rocky bottom near north edge of intake canal. Open to sea and chop = not protected by bars, mix of Syringodium, Halodule, and Thalassia. This bar drops off to deeper water fairly rapidly

15) same as #14.

Area V-SF Stations:

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9) Control site south of the intake canal; soft bottom with luxuriant beds of Syringodium: Lots of drift algae and attached algae outside of bed.

10) Same as #10 except that in October 95 the grassbed was covered with a thick layer of drift algae .... made it impossible to find stakes; algal layer was 1 m thick over parts of the bed.

11) Luxuriant <u>Syringodium</u> growth over a thin layer of very soft sediment easily disturbed. Site in protected water between intake and discharge canals.

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Table 5. Seagrass bed expansion or contraction (m) between years.

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Table 6. Mean percent cover of 1m2 quadrats by rhizophytic algae, seagrass and total vegetation for each station and sampling date. (P/I) indicates grassbed (P)erimeter or 2 meters (I)nside bed).

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Table 7. Dry Weight biomass (g/m2) Means and standard deviations from six replicate 25x25cm Quadrats.

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Table 7, Continued.

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Table 8. Biomass data and productivity of grass clip samples.

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Table 9. 1993-1995 Summary data, Crystal River NPDES Monitoring Project.

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<sup>1</sup> HW, <u>Halodule wrightii</u>; SF, <u>Syringodium filiforme</u>: mixed, more than one species was abundant<br><sup>2</sup> Of two remaining marked beds in this area.

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Figure 4. Bottom profiles at seagrass stations 1, 2, and 3, in<br>area I-HW. Water depth measurements were taken on the seagrass bed<br>perimeters and at 1 m and 2 m increments seaward of the seagrass bed edges.  $\sim$ 

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Figure 5. Bottom profiles at seagrass stations 5, 6, and 7, in area II-HW. Water depth measurements were taken on the seagrass bed perimeters and at 1 m and 2 m increments seaward of the seagrass bed edges.

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Figure 6. Bottom profiles at seagrass stations 4, 8, and 12, in<br>area III-SF. Water depth measurements were taken on the seagrass<br>bed perimeters and at 1 m and 2 m increments seaward of the seagrass bed edges.

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Figure 7. Bottom profiles at seagrass stations 13, 14, and 15, in area IV-Mix. Water depth measurements were taken on the seagrass bed perimeters and at 1 m and 2 m increments seaward of the seagrass bed edges.

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Figure 8. Bottom profiles at seagrass stations 9, 10, and 11, in area V-SF. Water depth measurements were taken on the seagrass bed perimeters and at 1 m and 2 m increments seaward of the seagrass bed edges.

V-SF



Figure 9. Sediment depth profiles at seagrass stations **1,** 2, and 3 in Area I-HW during October 1995. Vertical drop bars represent s in income in carring occurre rise. The creation creative representation of sediment depths, in this, as determined by probing the boccom of the grassbed edges.

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Figure 10. Sediment depth profiles at seagrass stations 5, 6, and 7 in Area II-HW during October 1995. Vertical drop bars represent sediment depths, in cms, as determined by probing the bottom on seagrass bed perimeters and at **I** m and 2 m increments seaward of the grassbed edges.

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Figure 11. Sediment depth profiles at seagrass stations 4, 8, and<br>12 in Area III-SF during October 1995. Vertical drop bars<br>represent sediment depths, in cms, as determined by probing the<br>bottom on seagrass bed perimeters

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Figure 12. Sediment depth profiles at seagrass stations 13, 14 and 15 in Area IV-Mix during October 1995. Vertical drop bars represent sediment depths, in cms, as determined by probing the bottom on seagrass bed perimeters and at **1** m and 2 m increments seaward of the grassbed edges.

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Figure 13. Sediment depth profiles at seagrass stations 11, 10, and 9 in Area V-SF during October 1995. Vertical drop bars represent sediment depths, in cms, as determined by probing the bottom on seagrass bed perimeters a Sediment depth profiles at seagrass stations 11, 10,

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Figure 14. Seagrass bed expansion (+ values) or contraction (- values) from 1993 to 1994 (top row of figures) and from 1993 to 1995 (bottom figures) at Stations 13, 14, and 15 in Area IV-Mix. Dotted lines across each bar graph represent the mean change for each station.

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Station 3 Station 2 Station 1 **6** 6 6 1993-1994 1993-1994 1993-1994 4 4 4 2 2  $\mathfrak{p}$ **NN** 0 **ignan** 0  $\Omega$  $-2$  $-2$  $-2$ **0**  $-4$  $-4$  $-4$ **0 -6** -6 **C)**  $-6$ 1 2 3 **I** 6 9 1 L **I** L 2 5 1 2 5 34 67 8 101112131415 **0** 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 **8** 9 101112131415 I 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 **0** 6 6 6 **C** 1993-1995 **1993-1995**  $1993 - 1995$  $\frac{1}{2}$ 4 4 4 2 **0M** 2 2  $\mathbb Z$   $\mathbb Z$   $\mathbb Z$ 0 <u>WMmmm</u>  $\Omega$  $\Omega$ Grass Ø -2 -2  $-2$  $-4$ -4 1 -4  $-6$ -6 -6 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 1011 121314 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **I1** <sup>12</sup> **1 2 3** 4 **5 6 7 8 9 10 11** 12 **13** Count of Fixed Markers Observed (Rank Order)

Figure 15. Seagrass bed expansion (+ values) or contraction (- values) from 1993 to 1994 (top row of figures) and from 1993 to 1995 (bottom figures) at Stations **1,** 2, and 3 in Area I-HW. Dotted lines across each bar graph represent the mean change for each station.

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Figure 16. Seagrass bed expansion (+ values) or contraction (- values) from 1993 to 1994 (top row of figures) and from 1993 to 1995 (bottom figures) at Stations 5, 6, and 7 in Area II-HW. Dotted lines across each bar graph

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Figure 17. Seagrass bed expansion (+ values) or contraction (- values) from 1993 to 1994 (top row of figures) and from 1993 to 1995 (bottom figures) at Stations 4, 8, and 12 in Area III-SF. Dotted lines across each bar graph represent the mean change for each station. All markers were lost at Station 4 in 1995.

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Figure 18. Seagrass bed expansion (+ values) or contraction (- values) from 1993 to 1994 (top row of figures) and from 1993 to 1995 (bottom figures) at Stations 9, 10, and 11 in Area V-SF. Dotted lines across each bar graph represent the mean change for each station.


through October **1995** for seagrass bed perimeters and interiors.

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Figure 20. Changes in percent bottom coverage by Syringodium filiforme from December 1993 Figure 20. Changes in percent bottom coverage by Syringodiam.<br>through October 1995 for seagrass bed perimeters and interiors

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Figure 21. Changes in percent bottom coverage by Halophila englemanii from December 1993 through October 1995 for seagrass bed perimeters and interiors.

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Figure 22. Changes in percent bottom coverage by Thalassia testudinum from December 1993 Figure 22. Changes in percent bottom coverage by Indiassia L<br>through October 1995 for seagrass bed perimeters and interiors

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Figure **23.** Changes in percent bottom coveraige **by** 'all'se-a-grass species .from December **<sup>1993</sup>** through October **1995** for seagrass bed perimeters and interiors.

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Figure 24. Changes in percent bottom coverage by all attached rhizophytic algae from December 1993 through October 1995 for seagrass bed perimeters and interiors.

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Figure 25. Bar graphs representing total SAV (seagrass and rhizophytic algae) coverage (cross-hatched area) vs. bare bottom (white space above bars) at 15 seagrass stations from December 1993 through October 1995. The top figure shows **SAV** coverage on seagrass bed perimeters and the bottom set shows coverages in bed interiors.



Figure 26. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of <u>Halodule wrightii</u> at all seagrass stations in Augus 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.

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SYRINGODIUM FILIFORME

Figure 27. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of <u>Syringodium filiforme</u> at all seagrass stations in August 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.



Figure 28. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of <u>Halophila englemanii</u> at all seagrass stations in August 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.

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Figure 29. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of <u>Thalassia testudinum</u> at all seagrass stations in August 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.

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Figure 30. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of all seagrass species at all seagrass stations in August 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.

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Figure 31. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of all rhizophytic algae at all seagrass stations i August 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.

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Figure 32. Dry weight biomass (g m<sup>-2</sup>) of all SAV (= seagrass and rhizophytic algae) at all seagrass stations in August 1994 and 1995. Vertical error bars represent + one standard deviation.



Figure 33. Shoot densities (shoots m<sup>-2</sup>) of Halodule wrightii in August 1994 and 1995. Erro bars represent **+** one standard deviation.

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Figure 34. Shoot densities (shoots m<sup>-2</sup>) of <u>Syringodium filiforme</u> in August 1994 and 1995 Error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.



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Figure 3! and 1995. Dry weight biomass production ( mg d<sup>-1</sup> m<sup>-2</sup>) for <u>Halodule wrighti</u> Error bars represent + one standard deviation in August 1994



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Figure 36. Dry weight biomass production **(** mg **d-1** M-2) for Syringodium filiforme in August 1994 and 1995. Error bars represent **+** one standard deviation.



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Appendix Table I. Coordinates of seagrass survey transects.

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Appendix Table II. Water and sediment depths at the seagrass bed perimeters and differences in depths at **0,** 1 and 2 meters from the bed edge.



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Appendix Table III.

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staked in distances or contraction of seagrass beds initially December 1993. The "Perimeter and "Radius" identify the marker stakes.

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Appendix Table IV. Vegetation coverage (percent) in seagrass beds for 1m2 quadrats along bed perimeters and 2 meters inside beds.

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Appendix Table VI. Biomass data and productivity (mg/m2/day) of grass clip samples.



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## RAI 3-4 Crystal River November 2001 Seagrass Survey

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### Seagrass Survey: November 2001 Resurvey at the Florida Power Crystal River Generating Facility.

Revisit to Area last surveyed in 1995 by MML.

Finalized March 7, 2002

Mr. David A. Bruzek Natural Resources Specialist Florida Power - a Progress Energy Company P.O. Box 14042 St. Petersburg, Florida 3733-4042

> By the Coastal Seas Consortium, Inc. P.O. Box 20818 Bradenton, Florida 34204-0818 cscmjm@aol.com

> > Michael J. Marshall Principal Investigator



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### **Introduction**

Mote Marine Laboratory (MML) surveyed seagrasses at the Florida Power Corporation (FPC) Crystal River facility in 1993, 1994 and 1995 (Estevez and Marshall, 1993; 1994; and 1995) in an attempt to determine the effect of newly installed helper cooling towers on the distribution of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) in the discharge area and within the adjacent estuarine environment. Earlier Mattson et al. (1988) surveyed seagrasses in the thermally impacted area and found that standing crop, productivity, and growth rates were lower than at sites away from the Point of Discharge (POD). MML found several trends in their 3 years of study; 1) several new beds of SAV appeared along transects which were largely completely barren in 1993; 2) recruitment of seagrass into barren areas was not extensive; 3) 8 of the 15 surveyed beds showed some expansion beyond their original boundaries 4) percent coverage of SAV declined at **10** of 15 sites. FPC contracted the Coastal Seas Consortium, Inc., to resurvey the same area in November 2001 in order to determine if SAV beds have changed since the 1995 MML survey.

Our goal in the 2001 resurvey was not to revisit all of the sites but to select several in the areas considered to be most strongly impacted by the thermal effluent and to compare those to the MML (1993 throughl995) results. Unfavorable weather conditions (rain and strong winds) limited us to surveys of basins 1, 2, and part of 3 (Figure 1). Basin 4 was not surveyed due to poor visibility. Observations were made in areas where visibility allowed and during low tides when we could walk the flats.

### Methods

### *Station surveys*

Our methods were much the same as those used by MML. A recent model Garmin GPS Map 76 was used to relocate the beds from location data given in the MML reports. After arriving at a station we attempted to find the original SAV boundary markers used by MML to delineate the seagrass bed edges in the first year of the MML studies (Estevez and Marshall, 1993). In 2001 we tried to find the markers by dragging a weighted rope through the previously marked beds. MML used the same method in its three years of monitoring. We found no markers at Stations 1 and 3 and two markers at Station 2. We therefore were not able to make the boundary measurements reported by MML. We relied upon MML's recorded GPS location data to find the approximate center of each bed. The Garmin **GPS** map 76 uses a Wide Area Augmentation System to improve accuracy of measurements and while we tried to find the SAV bed centers we were probably off by some unknown distance as a result of recent changes in the GPS navigational system. Finding two of the original markers at Station 2 at least confirmed that we had found

the original study site. Michael Marshall's (a participant in and co-author of the MML studies) memory of the MML study sites coincided with the GPS-found locations.

We used the GPS unit to locate the shoreward and seaward edges of the study sites. We stopped the width measurements when we reached 100 meters beyond the inside edge of each seagrass bed. The beds at each of the basin 1 sites extended well beyond the 1995 boundaries.

We used a  $1-m^2$  quadrat divided into 100 subunits (10X10 cm squares) to determine % cover within each bed (Figure 2). Our % cover observations were taken at a series of haphazardly selected points by tossing the quadrat in front of us as we walked or swam through the study sites.

### *Transect Surveys*

We used a similar quadrat technique to determine SAV bottom cover percentages along MML transects 1W, IN, 2W, 3W, 4W and 5W. We attempted to do more transects but poor water visibility limited this effort. . Instead of towing divers along the entire length of each transect we used a bounce diving method by which our observation points along each transect were spaced at 100m intervals (see Figure 3, transect 5W as an example of the dive point spacing). Upon arrival at a site a diver would determine SAV cover within 5 replicated  $1 m<sup>2</sup>$  quadrats and the boat operator would record those observations and depth, bottom type, and GPS determined location data. We used the MML location data again to find the transects. In most cases there were no markers left from the MML studies but we did find, through GPS navigation, two wooden stakes at the exact MML reported starting location at the northern most point of transect 5.

### Results and Discussion

The seagrass bed begins at a point 74.6 meters away from the point of discharge (POD) and continues across Basin 1 to the saltmarsh on Basin 1 's northern boundary. Transect seagrass observations (Table 1) from Transects **iN,** 1W,and 2W (Fig.3) which traverse Basin 1 show seagrass % coverages range, as an average of the series of points checked on each transect, from 32% on Transect **IN** to 39% on Transect 2W. *Halodule* was found at 50% of the points checked on transect IN, at 62.5% of the points on Transect 2W, 75% of the points on Transect 3W, and at 55.6% of the points on Transect 1W (not including the 2A points). The 2A points were an extension of transect 1W into Rocky Creek. *Halodule* was found at several points inside the creek on its banks until a point was reached where rocky substrate replaced the soft sediments found at the creek mouth.

MML found a "new" seagrass bed on Transect **IN** in 1995 with an average percent over of <5% mean cover. The bed was irregularly shaped. By November 2001, percent cover at the 14 spots surveyed on this transect reached 100% based

on the mean of bottom coverage from 5,  $1 \text{ M}^2$  quadrats. Thus on this transect seagrasses are much more widely distributed and bottom coverage is much higher than when last observed in 1995.

The same is true of the other Basin **I** transects, 1W, 2W, and 3W. No large beds of seagrass were found on these transects in 1993, 1994, or 1995(MML 1993, 1994,1995- see Figure 3). The only seagrass found on these transects in the MML study were centered around the black dot points shown in Figure 3. In our survey, November (2001) we found an extensive bed of seagrass with an overall average for all observed points of 39.19 % for Transect 2W, 38% for Transect 1W and 34.5% for Transect 3W. Seagrass cover reached 100% (as shown in Figure 1) for several points on these three transects.

### Intensive monitoring stations.

### Basin **1** Stations.

We visited all three of the Basin 1 stations (Stations 1, 2, and 3) which were originally located and monitored by MML in 1993. We were not able to find the iron and concrete parking stone markers that were set out in 1993. We relied upon the MML GPS derived latitude and longitude data to find the beds. We searched for but could not find the center point markers at any of the sites we visited. We did find two re-bar edge markers at Station 2. Our bed width measurements were therefore made from the GPS located center of each bed to the outside edge or to a point not exceeding 100 meters past the shoreward point. The 1995 Station **I** measurements (MML, 1995) showed that the bed width was not much greater than when it had been first measured in 1993: it averaged 2.88 feet wider than the original 1993 measurement of 13.17 feet from the approximate center to the seaward edge. In 2001 we stopped our survey on Station 1 at 217 feet from the approximate position of the center marker. The *Halodule* in this area continued much further toward the discharge channel.

*Halodule* coverage in the shoreward side of Station **I** averaged 88.9% (Table2). In 2001 seagrass in the outer area beyond the position of the edge in 1995 averaged 97.9%. These % cover data are similar to those reported by MML (1995;). MML reported an interior cover by *Halodule* of 76.5%. The perimeter seagrass in the MML 1995 report was 78.4%. *Halodule wrightii* was the only seagrass present in the Station **I** area in all of the MML reports and in our 2001 survey.

The interior area of Station 2 had a mean of 30% *Halodule* cover in 2001. After swimming beyond the southern edge of the vegetated area we found a sandy patch with 0% seagrass cover. Beyond that patch to the south seagrasses started up again and continued toward the discharge channel. *Halodule* in that area averaged

74% cover. MML reported an interior %cover of 47. **1%** and a perimeter % cover of 44.0% in 1995. Their 1994 report showed higher percent cover in the interior, 96.4% and perimeter, 89.3% bed areas. The sandy patch seen in 2001 was approximately 114' wide so the seagrass beyond that area should be considered a new bed. The bed was determined to be 136' wide from the north edge to the beginning of the sand patch. This is considerably wider than reported in MML (1995). *Halodule u'rightii* was the only seagrass observed at Station 3 and within the surrounding area. The decline in cover at Station 2 suggests a gradual loss of seagrass over time.

Station 3 SAV followed a similar pattern. *Halodule* covered an average 89.75% of the bottom near the original center. It covered 89.2% of the bottom in the newly colonized area beyond the edge of the bed where no seagrasses were found in 1995. MML reported a total cover of **51.6%** in 1995. Station 3 seagrasses now extend well beyond 100 meters past the center marker. This is much expanded from the dimensions reported by MML *(1995). Halodule* was the only seagrass species in this area.

We attempted to survey Stations 5,6, and 7 but low visibility in the area at the time of our study, November 13-16, 2001, prevented us from being able to see the bottom and seagrass if it existed.

We did resurvey stations 11 and 12 in Rocky Cove. Station 12 had a mix of Syringodium (11.5% cover) and *Halodule* (55.5% cover). Estevez and Marshall (see Table 6 in MML 1995;) reported a bottom cover of 94%. Visibility at Station 12 was also very poor. These results are similar to that reported in MML (1995). The seagrasses at Station 12 are bounded by oyster bars and a deep channel making further expansion of this bed impossible.

Station 11, located deep in Rocky Cove, had 100% in 2001 and 98.8% in 19995,cover by *Syringodiumfiliforme.* The only other SAV species, the green alga, *Halophila engelmanni* was found there in 1993 but was not seen in 1995. Poor visibility during our 2001 survey prevented us from seeing if the alga was present.

### Summary and Conclusions

Since the last MML survey (Estevez and Marshall, 1995) The seagrass *Halodule wrightii* has spread throughout Basin 1 and 2. Our results (Table 1) demonstrate that this species covers most of the area. It is only limited from covering the entirety of these two basins by rocky bars, shelly bottom inappropriate for seagrass growth and water depths considered to be either too shallow or too deep for *Halodule.* There is such extensive growth that prop scars (Fig.4) are now a problem in some areas. During our survey manatees were seen over the seagrass beds presumably feeding on the seagrass.

Basin 1 is now up to 50% covered by a large bed of relatively dense *Halodule* bordered by oyster bars, within a mosaic of exposed rock, shallow sandy bars, and a few deep channels. Basin **I** is probably the area most impacted by the thermal effluent from the discharge canal. Thus it appears that the helper cooling towers have apparently altered the thermal regime to achieve suitable conditions for seagrass survival, bed expansion, and reproduction.

Seagrass beds, in Basin 1, at the last MML survey in 1995 had not expanded more than 2.75 meters from the original boundaries established in 1993. On our survey we found that the boundaries of beds 1, 2, and 3 were now located more than 35 meters from the original approximate center of each site. In fact, the beds have now grown into a more or less continuous bed of seagrass throughout Basin **1.** Only inappropriate substrate types and depths presumably limiting to *Halodule* growth under the water clarity regime typical of this area break the bed in this area into large patches. There is a barren muddy/sandy band parallel to the discharge channel but it contained small, sparse patches of *Halodule* on our survey dates. These patches may indicate that this channel-side area is now being colonized by seagrass.

The large sand patch adjacent to Station 2 is an area that may not yet been colonized by seagrass. Seagrass adjacent to the seaward and shoreward borders of the sand patch is flourishing and the bed has expanded well beyond the limits of the Station 2 seagrass observed by MML.

Our observations in Basin 1 suggest that it might be possible for other seagrass species to grow in this area. *Halodule wrightii* is generally considered to be a fast growing early colonizer of shallow, barren areas within seagrass beds. Colonization by *Thalassia* and *Syringodium* would be expected to occur at a slower rate. The current mosaic-like arrangement of marsh, seagrass, rocky bars, oyster bars and shallow flats is ideal juvenile habitat for a large number of fish and invertebrate species. Fish can find shelter in the marshes and seagrasses at high tides and feed on the mud flats, oyster bars and rocky outcrops when tides are appropriate. We observed several large schools of small fishes while wading across our transects and at each station. Dolphins were also observed feeding on larger fish at numerous locations around the study site during our fieldwork.

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# *Figures*

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Figure **1.** Map of basins as defined in Estevez and Marshall (1993) for MML's seagrass studies. Seagrass beds are numbered 1-15. Basins are identified by codes **BI-**B5.



Figure 2. lm x **Im** quadrat used for this study. Photo shows the typical density of the seagrass, *Halodule,* at a location within 100m of the POD.



Figure 3. Transects monitored by MML. Black dots are locations where seagrass patches were located during the MML studies. The green area represents the current (November 2001) area which is largely covered by *Halodule.* Dark green on the south side of the discharge canal represents the distribution of *Syrngodium.*





## *Appendix*

Tables 1 and 2

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### Appendix Table 1. November 2001 Transect Data Florida Power Corporation Seagrass Survey

### Table **I** B





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Table 1D

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Appendix Table **1** (continued):

### Table **IE**



### Table **1** F

### Transect 1W (2A stations not in MML surveys)



Appendix -Table 2. Intensive monitoring FPC Station Data - 2001 Survey. **All** location data is given in degrees/minutes/seconds. Center locations are approximations of center positions established by MML.



note: Extends beyond 217+ feet from original center.

### Station 2

### Center at: **N28 58 00.8**



### Appendix -Table 2. Intensive monitoring FPC Station Data - 2001 Survey. All location data is given in degrees/minutes/seconds. Center locations are approximations of center positions established by MML.



note: Extends beyond 217+ feet from original center.

### Station 2

### Center at: **N28 58 00.8** Quad **# 1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 W82 43 **51.0** %Cover Bed Position Species **0 inner** sand **0 inner** sand **0 inner** sand 0 inner sand<br>4 inner Halodule 14 inner Halodule<br>75 inner Halodule 75 inner<br>7 inner Halodule<br>sand 0 inner 8 inner Halodule 8 inner Halodule<br>85 inner Halodule 35 inner 23 inner Halodule 95 inner Halodule 87 inner Halodule 95 inner Halodule<br>63 inner Halodule 63 inner 0 inner Halodule Quad **# %** Cover Bed Position Species 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 0 Outer **0** outer 0 outer 25 Outer 95 outer **90** 86 15.58 33.78 sand patch Halodule Halodule Halodule Halodule Avg. **30.00 SD 37.11**

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# *Seagrass Quantification Report for the Area Adjacent to the Crystal River Power Generation Facility, Florida*

*Data collected. Nov-Dec, 2007 Report: Apr 24, 2008*

Prepared for: Progress Energy Florida, Inc. **515** Independence Highway Inverness, FL 34453



11550 N. Meridian, Suite 600 Carmel, IN 46032 317-428-4591

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### A. Introduction/Project Goals

Progress Energy is a power generating facility that discharges coolant water into a marine costal area containing submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). The purpose of this study was to estimate the area covered by various species of seagrass, various species of macro algae, and areas with no plant cover, and to compare these results, if possible, to the conclusions of previous studies done in the same area from previous years.

To address these goals, ReMetrix employed several methods of data collection including hydroacoustic transect sampling, point-intercept rake sampling, SCUBA diver random point surveys, and several underwater video random samples. Each method had unique advantages and limitations, but each contributed to an accurate overall estimation of **SAV.**

### B. Study Area Description

The study area encompassed 3,522 acres although 688 acres were inaccessible due to oyster beds, shoals, or very shallow water. A total of 2,842 acres was analyzed for SAV cover. The area had many challenging navigational obstacles such as, sensitive vegetation and corals, shoals, oyster beds, shallow water areas, and manatee. Other challenges of this study area included tide fluctuations greater than three feet, areas with high winds, and water with low visibility.

During data collection, there were several manatee, dolphin and stingray sightings. The majority of these sightings occurred in the area labeled on the map.



study area for this project.

### **C.** Water Quality Sampling

Water quality information was collected at five of the ten diver sites at the same time the diver was in the water. Two sites representative of the average depths found throughout the study area were monitored every other day for the remainder of the study period. Five parameters were collected : water temperature, salinity, turbidity, light transmittance, and water depth.

Water temperature and salinity were measured using a YSI 556 multi-probe system (www.ysilifesciences.com, Figure 2a), turbidity was measured using a LaMotte 2020e portable turbidity meter (www.lamotte.com, Figure 2b); all three measurements were taken 1 foot below the water surface. Light transmittance was measured using a Secchi disk (Figure 2c) and water depth was measured by using a graduated lead line (Figure 2d). Table 1 below shows the breakout of water quality monitoring sites by depth. The full dataset of water quality information can be found in the Appendix.



### Table **1.** Water Quality Monitoring Sites

\*Sites were sampled every other day throughout the data collection period.



Figure 2a. YSI 556 multi-probe system. Figure 2b. LaMotte 2020c turbidity meter.







Figure 2c. Secchi disk Figure 2d. Graduated lead line

### **D.** Hydroacoustic Methodology (Background)

Hydroacoustic data is collected using a digital 420kH BioSonics (www.biosonicsinc.com) transducer mounted on a boat actively linked to DGPS. Transects are driven across the study area while the transducer pings the water column approximately five-to-ten times per second. The data from each ping are linked to a geographic coordinate via the DGPS beacon. Figure 3a depicts this process.



### Figures 3a-c. General depiction of the hydroacoustic mapping process. See text for explanations.

The data from each ping contains submerged plant cover and height information as well as the depth to the sediment layer. BioSonics Inc, testing indicates that the hydroacoustic system returns digital samples with greater than 0.013% accuracy every 1.8 centimeters. Figure 3b (above) shows an example of raw acoustic data collected along a sample transect.

Raw acoustic data are processed to filter out noise and calculate statistics, and then exported for viewing in a geographic information system (GIS). Data from all transects is combined in GIS and modeled using a geostatistical GIS extension to produce a vegetative cover estimate, (biocover) maps for the entire study area. Biocover is an estimate of the percentage of the bottom covered with plants. Figure 3c above shows a whole-site biocover model.

ReMetrix collected data from crossing transects oriented WSW to ENE spaced 400-meters apart and SSE to NNW spaced 60-meters apart. This totaled approximately 140 miles of transects collected over the 2,842-acre site. Figure 4 represents the proposed crossing transects used for hydroacoustic sampling of this site.

Figure 4. Crossing transects planned for hydroacoustic data collection totaled approximately 140-miles within the 2,842-acre study area. Closely spaced transects (oriented roughly north-south) were 60-meters apart, and widely spaced transects (oriented roughly east-west) were 400 meters apart.



### **E.** Species Sampling Methodology

Hydroacoustic vegetation sampling alone cannot currently explicitly determine species by their acoustic signatures. For this reason, supplemental physical sampling must be used in order to determine species. ReMetrix used three methods for collecting physical samples: rake samples, underwater video and SCUBA diver surveys.

### *Rake Sampling Methodology*

In areas deeper than three feet, a physical plant sample was collected by throwing a double-sided thatch rake toward the shoreline at each sampling site. A rake tethered to a 25-foot rope was tossed into the water and allowed to sink until it made contact with the bottom. The rake was then slowly dragged along the bottom back toward the boat, (Figure 5a).

In areas shallower than three feet, a rake with a handle was dipped into the water until it made contact with the bottom. Steady pressure was put on the rake handle as it was scraped along the bottom (Figure 5b,c).



**rigure 5a. rigure 5b. rigure 5c. rigure 5c.** Figures 5a-c. A double-sided thatch rake was used to sample submerged vegetation at 109 sample points.

At least two rake samples were taken at each of 109 sample points (Figure 6). Ninety-one pointintercept sites were located at hydroacoustic transect crossings and 18 off-transect sites were selected randomly to facilitate biocover model accuracy assessment. The data recorded about each sample included species name, relative abundance, density, and latitude and longitude (Table 2). If no plant was found, then "no plant" was recorded as the species name. Photos were taken at most sampling sites where vegetation was found.



Figure 6. Rake samples were taken at 109 locations (blue points); 91 points were collected at hydroacoustic transect crossings and 18 points were collected off-transects. Point numbers can be found on the Monitoring Sites map in the Appendix.

### Relative abundance

Relative abundance is a visual estimation of the proportion of the two rake samples combined for a site that each species represents. For example, if two species were found during a rake sample, one may have represented 75% of the sample and the other may have only represented 25% of the sample. In order to make this estimation quickly in the field, each species' relative abundance was assigned a score placing them in one of five easily discernable ranges. The ranges used in this study are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Relative abundance scores from two rake samples at each of 109 sample sites were placed into five visually discernable ranges for cover.



 $\tau$  sample in this context refers to an aggregate of both samples per physical sample site

### Density

Density is the percent of the immediate sample area represented by each species. For example, if only a few stems of a plant were pulled up by the rake, the density would be considered sparse. This estimation was made by gently compressing the combined vegetation sample and placing each species onto a one sided garden rake with graduated tines (Figure 7). The relative density of each species was estimated using four categories representative of the percent of the tines each species covered. Table 3 lists the categories and scale used for this estimation.



Figure 7. Species density was estimated by gently compressing the sample onto a one-sided garden rake with graduated tines. The white stripes on the tines mark 20% and 60% of the total tine length.

Table 3. Density scale for species found during rake sampling at each of the 109 sample sites estimated from the percent of the rake tines each species covered.



### *Video Sampling Methodology*

A video camera specifically designed for underwater use was affixed to a 12-foot long pole and carefully lowered into the water until it was just above the sediment layer. It was then panned around to find vegetation. When vegetation was observed, the camera was maneuvered to a range where the plants could be identified and held stationary for several seconds (Figure 8a). Thirty-one videos where taken at seventeen different random sampling locations (Figure 8b). ReMetrix encountered adverse environmental conditions that yielded mixed results when attempting to use video sampling as a reliable physical sampling method at some sample site locations.





camera was maneuvered to a range where plant identification was possible. videocamera symbols), all located north of the

Figure 8a. When vegetation was found, the video Figure 8b. Thirty-one video clips were made from camera was maneuvered to a range where plant seventeen random sampling locations (black discharge canal. Site numbers can be found on the Monitoring Sites map in the Appendix.

### *SCUBA Diver Survey Methodology*

To verify the plant type and growing conditions, a SCUBA diver survey was used. Prior to the diver entering the water, a hydroacoustic pass was made over the site, a DGPS point was taken over the specific diver entry site and a water quality sample was taken. Divers then entered the water to locate submerged plant beds, identify vegetative species present, measure plant heights, estimate percent bottom cover, and characterize overall bed density. Ten diver sites were surveyed (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Ten randomly selected SCUBA diver survey points (blue symbols) were sampled between 11/15/2007 and 11/16/2007. Site numbers can be found on the Monitoring Sites map in the Appendix.

### Density

Bed density was visually estimated as sparse, low, medium, or high density.

### Cover

Percent bottom cover and species composition was measured using the quadrat-cell methodology described by Estevez and Marshal (1995). Once a plant bed was found, a  $1-m^2$  quadrat subdivided into one hundred  $100$ -cm<sup>2</sup> cells was positioned two to three meters inside the bed's edge (Figure 10). Species name and number of  $100 \text{ cm}^2$  cells each species occupied was recorded. A cell was considered populated by a species if at least one rooted stem was found within a cell. The number of populated cells out of 100 is the percent bottom cover for the species. An example of a diver site cover table can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Genus and number of populated 100 cm<sup>2</sup> cells data from a sample diver site.





Figure **10. A** sub-divided 1-m' quadrat assisted divers in estimating species cover.

### F. Methodology Discussion

The goal for each of these methods was to help determine species type and cover. Although each successfully accomplished the goal of determining species presence/absence, they each had unique strengths and challenges.

The most time effective method to determine vegetation presence/absence was hydroacoustics. The challenge to using hydroacoustics is that it does not provide species information.

Diver sites were an excellent way to obtain accurate cover and species type without disturbing the vegetation. The drawback to diver sites was time. Diver surveys were too time consuming to sample the entire study area.

Video sample methods were an excellent way to determine if vegetation was growing on the bottom. It had the advantage of providing species identification and the exact latitude and longitude on screen. It was not as time consuming as a diver site, yet seagrass presence/absence could still be confirmed. The primary challenge with this method was determining the exact species due to cloudy or obscured water conditions. Furthermore, since the area the camera could view was small, there were times when the bottom was scanned for several minutes before any plants were detected.

The rake sample method could successfully capture the species type, relative density, and estimate relative abundance. Additionally, this method could be employed while collecting the hydroacoustics making this the least time consuming of all the methods. Another advantage was photos could be taken to document the species and abundance, which could be linked back to a precise spatial location. The primary challenge involved while sampling with the rake method was retrieving a plant sample from the sediment. The only way to verify if the rake sample was missing vegetation was to check the hydroacoustics. If the hydroacoustics indicated plant while rake samples showed no plant, additional rake samples were attempted. Certain seagrass species were missed by rake sampling simply due to plant physiology. Long narrow leaf blades, dense root mats and un-branched structure allowed the rake to "comb" through sparsely populated seagrass stands rather than hooking or snagging the vegetation. For sites where this was true, vegetation was typically pulled up by the anchor, which dug into the soil like a shovel (Figure 11). Anchor samples were recorded as rake samples when these situations arose.



Figure 11. The anchor would occasionally capture vegetation samples in seagrass beds when rake sampling did not.

### **G.** Data Analysis

In order to calculate the area of the project and define an extent for all the data, a study area polygon was created by tracing the water-land interface. This interface was based on digital ortho-rectified quarter-quadrangle (DOQQ) imagery dated 2004 and obtained from the USGS seamless data website (http://seamless.usgs.gov). Islands and obstructions were also isolated from the analysis area in a similar manor. The hydroacoustic data were processed though software that analyzes the return signature to determine the percent biocover.

### *Continuous and Dot-Density Representations*

After processing the hydroacoustic data, spatial data models were made to estimate biocover by interpolating between measured hydroacoustic samples and unsampled areas (Figures 12a and 12b). Both figures communicate slightly different informational contexts about estimated biocover, so both figures are included for discussion. Figure 12a shows the biocover model as a continuous surface, with color gradations indicating the percent biocover at each given location. A continuous biocover surface is the typical map output because the model estimates biocover

values for all geographic space between data transects. However, the seagrass and macroalgae beds within this study area typically occur as patchy cover, not large contiguous beds. For that reason, Figure 12b was created to more intuitively communicate the patchy nature of the beds. Figure 12b shows the exact same biocover model as seen in Figure 12a, but shows it as a gradational dot-density surface instead. Areas of high percentage biocover (reds and oranges on the map) have dots (a.k.a., "beds") spaced very closely together, as one might expect to naturally observe in a high biocover area. Areas of lower percentage biocover (yellows and greens) have dots (beds) spaced further apart, as one might expect to naturally observe in a low biocover area. It is important to note that the coverage statistics for both types of maps are the same; only the display techniques are different. Other figures using the dot-density technique are included in the Appendix.

After the model was completed, assessments for model accuracy were conducted by checking the model against rake samples, diver surveys, and video samples to calculate errors of omission and commission (see Section H).

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**II**

### *Endpoints of Noise Threshold Settings*

A patented software algorithm is used to interpret the amount of submerged vegetation along each hydroacoustic transect. Examples of this process can be seen in the figures labeled "Transect Line 2007x" found in Appendix (these show the raw transect data with corresponding interpretations). Noise threshold settings influence how conservatively the algorithm filters noise within the hydroacoustic signal responses. The noise threshold settings are based on established ranges and can be adjusted by the data analyst during data processing. As processing proceeds, the data analyst compares the amount of submerged vegetation interpreted by the algorithm with visual inspection of raw transect data and other field data types. Noise threshold settings are considered acceptable when the data types are in agreement.

For any project, noise threshold settings can fall within an acceptable range based on a variety of environmental and physical factors related to the data collection (e.g., surface noise during data collection, water depth, physical structure and density of the target vegetation, etc.). The acceptable noise threshold settings in this project fell within a small range primarily due to the short, spindly nature of the seagrass blades. The endpoints of the acceptable range are termed 'conservative' settings and 'less conservative' settings. The data models obtained using results within the acceptable range are considered by ReMetrix to be realistic models of the actual submerged vegetation cover in the project area. For that reason, cover models produced from each endpoint of the acceptable range are provided for comparison in Figures 13a ('conservative' thresholds) and 13b ('less conservative' thresholds).

The total biocover for the conservative noise threshold settings is 7.6%. The total biocover for the less conservative noise threshold settings is 10.4%. Table 7 in Section I provides greater detail of specific biocover types for the threshold endpoints.

The total biocover results obtained by the conservative noise threshold settings are used in the statistical calculations discussed in Section H and elsewhere in this report, unless noted otherwise.

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Figure 13a. Map showing the 'conservative' interpretation of total biocover (7.6%) within the project area. (See above section for explanation.)

Figure 13b. Map showing the 'less conservative' interpretation of total biocover (10.4%) within the project area. (See above section for explanation.)

 $\overline{c}$
### H. Accuracy Assessment of the Model

Typical measures for error in models are *omission* and *commission* error. These measures estimate how well a model correlates with actual sample data at the same location. For this analysis, ReMetrix compared all three types of physical sampling results (both as a whole and individually) to the biocover model derived from hydroacoustic transect data as a means for determining model correlation.

We used two 'classes' to develop the error estimate: *'plant',* for where a rake sample or biocover model indicated plant was present, or *'no plant',* where a rake sample or biocover model indicated no plants were present. As a means for explaining a particularly difficult concept we will follow just one comparison through the description, however error was calculated for both 'classes' and both types of error. In the following example, we will use 'plant' rake samples and 'no plant' areas in the model.

Calculating omission error: Of all the physical sampling points indicating plant was found, what proportion of these points lie within a 'no plant' area in the model? In this scenario, a high omission error suggests that the model could be underestimating the amount of plant that is truly present at that location.

Calculating commission error: Of all physical sampling points ('plant' or 'no plant') that lie within a 'no plant' area in the model, what proportion are 'plant' physical sample points? In this scenario, a high commission error suggests that the model could be overestimating the amount of 'no plant' that is truly present at that location.

Table 5 shows omission and commission errors of the model compared to all physical sampling methods combined. The higher 'no plant' omission error would suggest the model may not account for all the non-plant areas that were actually present, however some factors should be taken into consideration. Rake samples were taken from the bow of the boat while the hydroacoustic equipment and GPS antenna were located near the stern of the boat (approximately 18-feet of separation). The typical rake sample was made approximately 20-feet away from the boat. Combining these two distances results in a margin of error up to 38-feet between the nearest hydroacoustic point and the site of rake collection (depending upon the orientation of the boat and the actual rake sample distance at each site). Additionally, the boat may have drifted with currents while video of the bottom was taken so the actual position of the GPS antenna may have not coincided precisely with the location of the video sample or the hydroacoustic sample. Similarly, divers did not necessarily remain directly under the boat (or GPS antenna) while counting plants and therefore diver reference points may not directly relate to hydroacoustic estimates. These positional errors can account for a majority of the error when evaluating the omission and commission statistics (Table 6).





Table 6. Study area-wide BioCover model accuracy estimate after consideration of positional error (38 feet) due to GPS antenna location on the boat relative to the physical sampling location.



The patchiness or randomness of aquatic vegetation beds, and the characteristics of very low-density vegetation might explain the remaining error. A majority of the areas where the model indicated there was "plant" but physical sampling indicated "no plant" occurred in areas of very low-density vegetation  $(69\% \text{ in} < 5\% \text{ cover}, 86\% \text{ in} < 10\%$ cover), where the probability of a physical sampling method contacting vegetation was low. No adjustments were made to the model for these areas since the number of hydroacoustic samples (1,116,900) vastly out-numbers the number of physical samples (139 total). After reviewing the hydroacoustic data for many of these areas, ReMetrix confirmed that these zones have low-density plant populations where a limited number of physical samples may have easily missed patchy or sparsely populated plant beds.

Results of additional error estimates comparing each physical sampling method individually can be found in the Appendix.

## **I.** Vegetation Area Determination

The overarching goal of this project was to determine the number of acres of seagrass. Using the physical samples as a guide, ReMetrix separated vegetated areas in the study area into four classes: seagrass, other, mixed and no plant. Sample sites where *Halodule spp., Syringodiumfiliforme, Thalassia testudinum,* or *Halophila engelmannii* were found exclusively were placed in the 'seagrass' class. Sample sites where vegetation other than seagrass, e.g. *Caulerpa* or *Udotea,* was found exclusively were classed as 'other'. Sites where both seagrass and other species were found together were classified as 'mixed', and sites where no plants were collected during the rake sample, diver survey, or video sample, were placed into the 'no plant' class.

The second step in this process was to divide the study area into zones which could be labeled one of the four predefined classes. Zone boundaries were made using a method called Thiessen polygons. Thiessen polygons are mathematically defined by the intersections of perpendicular bisectors of the lines between all the sampling sites (Figure 14). Each zone was assigned the class of its corresponding sample site's classification, and the area of vegetation within that zone was calculated.



Figure 14. The study area was divided into Thiessen-polygon-defined zones based upon the spatial location of the sampling sites.

The percent cover within each zone was calculated from the biocover map derived from the hydroacoustic sampling method. The product of the zone area and the mean percent cover within that zone returns the number of acres of vegetation in that zone. Figure 15 shows an example of one zone with tabulated results.



Figure 15. Acres of vegetation in a class were calculated from the area of the zone and the mean percent biocover from the hydroacoustic model.

Acres of each vegetation class by zone were summed to determine the number of acres of seagrass, other, mixed, and no plant classes (Table 7).

Table 7. Vegetation class areas were summed from the acres in class calculated in each zone and percent of the total project acreage was calculated.



#### Conservative Noise Threshold

#### Less Conservative Noise Threshold



It was possible to subdivide the 'mixed' class acres into percent 'seagrass' and 'other' since relative abundance of individual species was recorded. The product of the area of a mixed zone and the corresponding relative abundance for each species yielded the acres of each class (seagrass and other). The model indicated plants were present in a number of 'no plant' zones. Acres of vegetation found within a no plant zone were assigned to a new class named 'unclassified'. The unclassified acreage represented 29% of the total vegetated area so it is important to understand where these unclassified zones occurred. Fifty percent of the unclassified vegetation occurred in just 10% of the no plant classified zones. This means the bulk of the unclassified data occurred in a relatively small number of zones. All six of these zones were surrounded by zones of a defined vegetation type. Based on the classification of adjoining zones, many were likely mixed stands of seagrass (Figure 16). Most likely, the rake sampling was not representative of the whole zone.



Figure 16. The six 'no plant' zones showing high vegetative cover were most likely 'mixed' zones where a physical sampling method was unable to locate vegetation.

#### **J.** Comparison to Previous Work

Broad comparisons were made between 2007 data and the transect data reported in Marshall (2001). The data from 2001 was loaded into a GIS and transects were drawn between the sampling points. Average biocover was calculated from the current model along the 2001 transects in an attempt to compare the same areas. Average cover was tabulated for both 2001 and 2007 (Table 8). There could be several reasons the 2007 results were lower than the 2001 results. First, 2007 data were not sampled along the exact same transects, rather they were based on a segment laid over a model of hydroacoustic data. Both transects 2a and 3w each had two data points that were more than 50 meters from any 2007 sampling locations.

Table 8. Comparisons were made for average cover between 2001 and 2007 along similar transect lines.



Another concern when comparing these two sample methods is simply the difference in the sampling methodology used to calculate cover. Comparing quadrats sampled along a transect to a model derived from hydroacoustic transect sampling should be done with careful consideration of how each method calculates percent cover. The 2001 quadrat method estimated plant cover as  $1\%$  per  $100 \text{ cm}^2$ , even if it was very sparsely distributed and repeated every 100 meters along the transect. A transect's average biocover was then calculated by averaging over all cover estimates for that transect. Hydroacoustic sampling records 10 pings per second of plant or no plant and computes an average across 10 pings to make one sample estimate of biocover. This equals one sample per second or roughly one sample per 2.5 meters. These samples are then used to create a model, thereby interpolating a 5-meter grid between samples in all directions. As a example, we investigated video point 9992 located less than 300 ft from a 2001 reported sampling location along transect 4w (Figure 17). The 2001 sample listed *Halodule* at 86% cover, while the 2007 model estimated it at 11% cover.



Figure 17. Screen capture of digital underwater video sample (left) showing sparse vegetative cover, with corresponding sample location (right).

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The following illustration (Figure 18) may describe why the average cover comparison from 2001 to 2007 differs so greatly. In the following diagram, a green cell represents a 'plant' cell.



Hydroacoustic pings on 2.5m scale 2 of 5 pings show plant = 40% cover

Hydroacoustic Sample  $= 40\%$ 

Figure 18 (whole page). Comparison of

Furthermore, transects 1W, **IN,** 3W, and 4W don't appear to be sampled on 100-meter intervals. This indicates there may have been some post-directed sampling used for the 2001 data, which may have greatly influenced the average cover for the transect.

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# *Appendix*

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**Sample Method Comparison<br>Diver Site DX / Reke Toss #891&**<br>Video 112 / Reke Toss 112











### APPENDIX - Calculations of Biocover Model Accuracy

 $\overline{a}$ 

BioCover model error estimates for combined physical sampling points and comparisons of the three different physical sampling methods individually. The total physical sample point count does not match the sum of the individual sampling methods points since there were a number of cases where two or more methods were used for sampling a single location and the results did not match, (one indicated 'plant' the other indicated 'no plant'). In these instances only the sample where 'plant' was found was used in the 'all' analysis since 'plant' was indeed found at the location. *See Section H of the report for a discussion of interpreting these tables.*





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APPENDIX - Calculations of Biocover Model Accuracy (continued)









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