

# Snake Bight Pole/Troll Zone

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Everglades National Park



The waters of Florida Bay are often placid and stretch off in the distance without a ripple. Heat gives haze to the horizon so that it is sometimes almost impossible to tell where the water stops and the sky begins.

—Daniel B. Beard, *Everglades National Park Project*, October 1938

## What is the Snake Bight Pole/Troll Zone?

Snake Bight—one of the most popular places in all of Florida Bay and Everglades National Park—is now a designated pole/troll zone. The zone was created to provide enhanced protection of Snake Bight’s sensitive aquatic vegetation and wilderness resources, improve the quality of flats fishing, enhance paddling and wildlife-viewing opportunities, and expand education on proper shallow-water boating techniques.

Boaters need to be aware that within the pole/troll zone internal combustion motors can only be used in Tin Can or Snake Bight channels (where on-plane transit is permitted), and the idle speed-no wake all other areas of the zone. Within Jimmy’s Lake area, boats may only be propelled by push poles, paddles, or electric trolling motors.

Keep in mind that you may end up a mile or more from the nearest channel or area allowing internal combustion motor use, so proper planning is essential. Before heading out, check the day’s tides and weather forecast, particularly wind conditions and the likelihood of thunderstorms. It is also important to know your physical capability to navigate the zone using a push pole or paddle, and your trolling motor battery capacity.

Be aware that at low tide, many areas of the zone are less than one foot in depth and some flats become exposed. Consequently, the best vessels to use in the pole/troll zone include shallow-draft boats, canoes and kayaks.

## Protecting Seagrass

Seagrass is one of the most important components of the Florida Bay ecosystem. These lush meadows provide vital habitat for many

animals, including sea turtles, manatees, crocodiles, and wading birds. In addition, more than 200 species of fish and 30 species of crustaceans, many of which are important from a commercial as well as a recreational standpoint, call these areas home.

Boating in waters too shallow can churn up sediment that reduces water clarity and the amount of sunlight needed for these plants to thrive. It can also lead to boat groundings and propeller scarring, which damage fragile seagrass beds. Each year, park rangers investigate about 100 groundings in the bay, while many more go unreported. In a recent study, park scientists detected 12,000 individual seagrass scars in Florida Bay with a combined length of 325 miles.

Depending on their severity, propeller scars can take years or decades to heal and can destroy habitat for fish and other Florida Bay animals, including several threatened and endangered species.

It is expected that the pole/troll zone will lead to increased protection of these habitats and Florida Bay’s other outstanding resources, including the bay bottom—which is federally designated wilderness—while providing better visitor experiences.



## How Will We Know It's Working?

The park is implementing a monitoring plan to help assess the pole/troll zone’s effectiveness in protecting seagrass, while enhancing fishing and other recreational experiences. In addition, the park plans to meet periodically with users to obtain feedback on how well the zone is working and ways to improve it.

If you would like to provide feedback on the Snake Bight Pole/Troll Zone, send an e-mail to [ever\\_information@nps.gov](mailto:ever_information@nps.gov). For additional information and updates, please visit the park’s website: [www.nps.gov/ever](http://www.nps.gov/ever).

<p><b>Pole/Troll Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of internal combustion engines is prohibited (except in marked channels and in Jimmy’s Lake).</li> <li>• Boats may operate under power in marked channels and at idle speed in Jimmy’s Lake.</li> <li>• Electric trolling motors and non-motorized power sources, such as <b>push poles</b>, <b>paddles</b>, and <b>oars</b>, are permitted.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IDLE SPEED NO WAKE</b></p>	<p><b>POLE/TROLL ZONE USE OF COMBUSTION MOTORS PROHIBITED</b></p>	<p>If your intended destination on Florida Bay includes Snake Bight, take a few moments to review the map above (or at the Flamingo boat ramp) and the signs you will find out on the water (left).</p> <p>Please note, the map is not for navigational purposes; for safe boating, nautical charts are indispensable.</p>
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