

Pelagic



Status

Current condition: Unknown. Due to the lack of sufficient map data for this habitat category, no acreage estimates are currently available.

Habitat Description

FNAI type: None

The Pelagic environment includes the waters lying over the continental shelf (neritic zone) and waters beyond the continental shelf. The Pelagic community lives in the water column above the seafloor and below the surface. This community does not depend on the seabed, although its members may visit it occasionally. The community consists of free-swimming creatures known as nekton and less- or non-motile plankton.

In Florida, this environment extends three nautical miles off of the Florida east coast and nine nautical miles off of the Florida Gulf coast. Maximum depths vary from approximately 30 feet (9 m) in the Gulf of Mexico to more than 1,000 feet (304 m) off of the Florida Keys and southeast Florida.

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Mammals

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • <i>Eubalaena glacialis</i> | North Atlantic Right Whale |
| • <i>Kogia simus</i> | Dwarf Sperm Whale |
| • <i>Kogia breviceps</i> | Pygmy Sperm Whale |
| • <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> | Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin |

Birds

- *Aythya affinis*
 - *Gavia immer*
 - *Podiceps auritus coronatus*
 - *Pelecanus occidentalis*
 - *Fregata magnificens*
 - *Sterna nilotica*
 - *Sterna caspia*
 - *Sterna maxima*
 - *Sterna dougallii*
 - *Sterna anaethetus*
 - *Sterna fuscata*
 - *Anous stolidus*
- Lesser Scaup
 - Common Loon
 - Horned Grebe
 - Brown Pelican
 - Magnificent Frigatebird
 - Gull-billed Tern
 - Caspian Tern
 - Royal Tern
 - Roseate Tern
 - Bridled Tern
 - Sooty Tern
 - Brown Noddy

Reptiles

- *Chelonia mydas*
 - *Eretmochelys imbricata*
 - *Caretta caretta*
 - *Lepidochelys kempii*
 - *Dermochelys coriacea*
- Green Turtle
 - Hawksbill
 - Loggerhead
 - Kemp's Ridley
 - Leatherback

Fish

- *Rhincodon typus*
 - *Carcharhinus acronotus*
 - *Carcharhinus brevipinna*
 - *Carcharhinus falciformis*
 - *Carcharhinus isodon*
 - *Carcharhinus leucas*
 - *Carcharhinus limbatus*
 - *Carcharhinus obscurus*
 - *Carcharhinus perezii*
 - *Galeocerdo cuvier*
 - *Negaprian brevirostris*
 - *Prionace glauca*
 - *Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*
 - *Sphyrna lewini*
 - *Sphyrna mokarran*
 - *Sphyrna zygaena*
 - *Carcharias taurus*
 - *Alopias superciliosus*
 - *Alopias vulpinus*
 - *Carcharodon carcharias*
 - *Isurus oxyrinchus*
 - *Isurus paucus*
 - *Aetobatus narinari*
 - *Manta birostris*
 - *Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*
 - *Megalops atlanticus*
 - *Anguilla rostrata*
 - *Alosa aestivalis*
 - *Alosa alabamae*
 - *Alosa mediocris*
- Whale Shark
 - Blacknose Shark
 - Spinner Shark
 - Silky Shark
 - Finetooth Shark
 - Bull Shark
 - Blacktip Shark
 - Dusky Shark
 - Reef Shark
 - Tiger Shark
 - Lemon Shark
 - Blue Shark
 - Atlantic Sharpnose Shark
 - Scalloped Hammerhead
 - Great Hammerhead
 - Smooth Hammerhead
 - Sand Tiger
 - Bigeye Thresher
 - Thresher Shark
 - White Shark
 - Shortfin Mako
 - Longfin Mako
 - Spotted Eagle Ray
 - Giant Manta
 - Gulf Sturgeon
 - Tarpon
 - American Eel
 - Blueback Herring
 - Alabama Shad
 - Hickory Shad

- *Alosa sapidissima* American Shad
- *Menidia conchorum* Key Silverside
- *Hemiramphus balao* Balao
- *Hemiramphus brasiliensis* Ballyhoo
- *Hyporhamphus meeki* False Silverstripe Halfbeak
- *Bryx dunckeri* Pugnose Pipefish
- *Hippocampus reidi* Longsnout Seahorse
- *Syngnathus fuscus* Northern Pipefish
- *Syngnathus louisianae* Chain Pipefish
- *Syngnathus pelagicus* Sargassum Pipefish
- *Syngnathus springeri* Bull Pipefish
- *Epinephelus itajara* Goliath Grouper
- *Mycteroperca bonaci* Black Grouper
- *Mycteroperca microlepis* Gag
- *Pomatomus saltatrix* Bluefish
- *Rachycentron canadum* Cobia
- *Coryphaena hippurus* Dolphinfish
- *Alectis ciliaris* African Pompano
- *Caranx latus* Horse-eye Jack
- *Elagatis bipinnulata* Rainbow Runner
- *Selar crumenophthalmus* Bigeye Scad
- *Seriola dumerili* Greater Amberjack
- *Seriola rivoliana* Almaco Jack
- *Seriola zonata* Banded Rudderfish
- *Trachinotus carolinus* Florida Pompano
- *Trachinotus falcatus* Permit
- *Lutjanus analis* Mutton Snapper
- *Lutjanus cyanopterus* Cubera Snapper
- *Lutjanus griseus* Gray Snapper
- *Lutjanus synagris* Lane Snapper
- *Ocyurus chrysurus* Yellowtail Snapper
- *Rhomboplites aurorubens* Vermilion Snapper
- *Lobotes surinamensis* Atlantic Tripletail
- *Cynoscion regalis* Weakfish
- *Clepticus parrae* Creole Wrasse
- *Acanthocybium solandri* Wahoo
- *Scomberomorus cavalla* King Mackerel
- *Scomberomorus maculatus* Spanish Mackerel
- *Scomberomorus regalis* Cero
- *Thunnus albacares* Yellowfin Tuna
- *Thunnus atlanticus* Blackfin Tuna
- *Thunnus thynnus* Bluefin Tuna
- *Xiphias gladius* Swordfish
- *Istiophorus platypterus* Sailfish
- *Balistes capriscus* Gray Triggerfish
- *Canthidermis sufflamen* Ocean Triggerfish
- *Aluterus schoepfii* Orange Filefish
- *Aluterus scriptus* Scrawled Filefish
- *Chilomycterus schoepfii* Striped Burrfish

Invertebrates *

- *Physalia physalis* Portuguese Man-o-war

- *Aurelia aurita* Moon Jelly
- *Stomolophus meleagris* Cannonball Jelly
- *Mnemiopsis mccradyi* Comb Jelly

* Only Invertebrates that use the Pelagic environment as obligate adult habitat are listed.

Conservation Threats

Threats to the Pelagic habitats that were also identified for multiple other habitats are addressed in the Chapter Multiple Habitat Threats and Conservation Actions. These threats include:

- Channel modification/shipping lanes
- Harmful algal blooms
- Incompatible fishing pressure
- Incompatible industrial operations
- Incompatible wildlife and fisheries management strategies
- Invasive animals
- Key predator/herbivore Loss
- Nutrient loads (urban)

The following stresses and sources of stress threaten this habitat:

Stresses		Habitat Stress Rank
A	Altered primary productivity	High
B	Altered species composition	High
C	Altered water quality–nutrients	High
D	Altered water quality–physical, chemistry	High
E	Missing key communities or functional guilds/trophic shift	High
F	Keystone species missing or lacking in abundance	High

The sources of stress, or threats, were used to generate conservation actions.

Sources of Stress		Habitat Source Rank	Related Stresses (see above)
1	Harmful algal blooms	High	A, B, C, E
2	Inadequate stormwater management	High	A, B, C, D
3	Key predator/herbivore losses	High	B, E, F
4	Nutrient loads (all sources)	Medium	A, C, E
5	Incompatible fishing pressure	Medium	B, F
6	Invasive animals	Medium	B
7	Placement of artificial structures	Low	B
8	Incompatible aquaculture operations	Low	C
9	Channel modification/shipping lanes	Low	D
10	Incompatible industrial operations	Low	B

Sources of Stress		Habitat Source Rank	Related Stresses (see above)
11	Incompatible wildlife and fisheries management strategies	Low	B, F
12	Vessel impacts	Low	
13	Acoustic impacts	Low	
14	Fishing gear impacts	Low	
Statewide Threat Rank of Habitat		High	

Conservation Actions

Actions to abate the threats to Pelagic habitats that were also identified as statewide threats (see list above) are in the Chapter Multiple Habitat Threats and Conservation Actions. Many of the threats to Pelagic habitats are the same as for several other marine and estuarine habitats. Consequently, actions to abate these threats will be the same or similar to the actions recommended for abating threats to several other marine and estuarine habitats (e.g., Coral Reef, Hard Bottom, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation).