



When brought to the boat, scallops should be immediately placed on ice in a cooler for the trip to shore, unless you decide to clean the scallops while on the water. Scallops are quite sensitive to dry conditions, so be sure to keep them cool and moist. They usually die shortly after being placed on ice, especially if fresh water gets into their shells. Placing them on ice, however, makes them easier to open, because the muscle holding the shells together relaxes. A scallop, clam, or oyster knife, or even a teaspoon, can be used to open the shells and cut the white muscle free, discarding the shells and unwanted soft parts. Although most Floridians only eat the scallop muscle, in many other parts of the world the entire animal is eaten, much like we eat clams and oysters. If this is done, scallops should be fully cooked because many open harvest areas for scallops are not classified for harvest of other shellfish species.


CARE AND HANDLING

Scallops may be spotted on or near the bottom of seagrass beds, usually lying on their ventral shells. Often, they are easiest to find in deeper cuts through grass beds or along borders where the sand/mud meets the edge of the grasses. Scallops have dozens of neon-blue eyes and may try to swim away when they see you, but they do not swim fast or far. Keep collected scallops in a mesh bag, rather than in a pocket or in your swimsuit to avoid being pinched.

Though not required, collecting scallops that are at least 1.5 to two inches in size is seen as a best scalloping practice because the scallops are large enough to produce enough meat to make cleaning worthwhile. This also gives you a better view of the scallop's anatomy. Scallops are considered a delicacy in many parts of the world, including Florida. Scallops are harvested from the water by hand or with a landing net or dip net. Scallops must remain in the legal scalloping area while in possession of scallops on the water. See more on the legal requirements for divers-down flags in the equipment section.

COLLECTING

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Swim mask
- Snorkel
- Swim fins
- Small mesh bag
- Divers-down flag (required by law) 
- » Displayed on vessel; must be at least 20 inches by 24 inches with a stiffener to keep the flag unfurled. Should only be displayed while snorkelers are in the water; display above the vessel's highest point.
- » Tethered to diver; must be at least 12 inches by 12 inches; mandatory when using a mask and snorkel from the beach unless it is a marked swimming area.
- » You must make reasonable efforts to stay within 300 feet of a divers-down flag on open waters and within 100 feet of a flag within rivers, inlets, or navigation channels.
- Boat
- » Usually required to get to the best scalloping areas. In shallow water, it is possible to wade for scallops in the seagrass or to collect them from a shallow-draft boat using a dip net or landing net, but these methods are not very productive. Most scallopers go by boat into water 4 to 10 feet deep where they anchor, put up their dive flag, and snorkel over the beds, collecting the scallops by hand.

Cleaning Your Shells

- » Be courteous of other scallopers and move your boat away from the scalloping areas first, then anchor. It's no fun scalloping where others are cleaning their catch.
- » When done cleaning scallops, do not discard shells in rivers, channels, springs, or in the water at boat ramps or marinas. Shells could fill these areas, incurring costs to remove the shells and causing negative impacts on swimmers, wildlife, and navigation. Discard scallop shells out in open Gulf waters, or store shells in a bag and discard at home.
- » Want to keep shells to use for crafts or garden cover? Try placing the shells in a net bag and putting them back into the water. Small fish and crabs will be happy to clean the shells.

Always consult the FWC website for dates of current and 10 gallons of whole scallops per vessel. Limit will increase to 2 gallons of whole scallops per person (1 gallon of whole scallops per person or 5 gallons of whole scallops per vessel). From July 1st to Labor Day, the bag limit will increase to 2 gallons of whole scallops per person or 5 gallons of whole scallops per vessel during the season. Harvesting is allowed from the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal (in Bay County) to the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Artpéka). This region includes all state waters east of Rock Island near the mouth of the Fenholloway River in Taylor County and north of Alligator Pass day beacon #4 near the mouth of the Suwannee River in Levy County.

2020: The season is open June 15th to Labor Day. From June 15th to June 30th, the bag limit will be reduced by half (1 gallon of whole scallops per person or 5 gallons of whole scallops per vessel). From July 1st to Labor Day, the bag limit will increase to 2 gallons of whole scallops per person or 5 gallons of whole scallops per vessel during the season. Harvesting is allowed from the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal (in Bay County) to the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Artpéka). This region includes all state waters east of Rock Island near the mouth of the Fenholloway River in Taylor County and north of Alligator Pass day beacon #4 near the mouth of the Suwannee River in Levy County.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

In Florida, commercial harvest of bay scallops is banned. In general, recreational harvesters need a saltwater fishing license to harvest bay scallops, even when fishing from shore. There are some exceptions, listed in the FWC website (<http://myfwc.com>). Exceptions include when fishing (scalloping) from a for-hire vessel (guide, charter, party boat) that has a valid vessel license.



RECIPES

SCALLOP CEVICHE*

Mix one cup lime juice, one cup lemon juice, one cup of chopped cilantro, four finely chopped and seeded Serrano peppers, three finely chopped cloves of garlic, one coarsely chopped red onion, one tablespoon sea salt, and ground black pepper to taste in a zipper-style bag.

Two hours before serving, add in about two pounds of scallops. Drain away excess juices and assemble the ceviche over salad greens or avocado half. Touch everything off with a garnish of cilantro leaves.

*Recipe and photo courtesy of Tommy Thompson.

SIMPLY DELICIOUS SCALLOPS*

Sauté 3 pounds Florida scallops in 2 tablespoons melted butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Stir until opaque, about 1 minute. Overcooking makes the texture rubbery. Remove scallops from skillet and set aside.

Wipe out skillet, then melt ½ cup butter over medium-low heat; add 2 cloves garlic, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir for 3 minutes and add scallops.

Serve immediately over prepared pasta of your choice, such as angel hair. Garnish with fresh dill and season with freshly ground pepper.

*Recipe courtesy of Fresh from Florida Seafood. For more seafood recipes, visit <http://www.fl-seafood.com>.

The scallops along the west coast of Florida are considered groups of interconnected subpopulations, called a "metapopulation." Some scientific studies have compared the genetics from different subpopulations, showing that the Steinhatchee area may be supplying larvae to other subpopulations. Over time, the core population expands and contracts on the edges, leading to variable catches from year to year. Unlike other areas where scallop populations have crashed due to overfishing, degraded water quality, and loss of critical seagrass habitat, the Big Bend supports a healthy, sustained crop almost every year. Efforts to restore scallop populations are ongoing in several areas of Florida, including the southwest region, where scallops flourished and supported a productive commercial fishery in the 1950s and 60s. Early restocking efforts that used free-living cultured scallops were not very successful. Scallops are known to be "synchronized spawners" when one spawns, they all do. A number of adult, spawning scallops were placed in cages on bay bottoms where healthy populations previously existed. It was found that hatchery-reared scallops held in close proximity appeared to have an increased chance of successfully reproducing over natural scallops that are sparsely distributed. Recent studies by researchers, including scientists from University of Florida, University of South Florida, Mote Marine Laboratory, and FWC, have shown that adult populations may quickly rebound in some southwest Florida locations when hatchery-reared "pediveligers," the last

recreational harvest. Bend counties is key to the sustainability of the show that the scallop population within the Big of Mexico. Results of surveys have continually reviews the status of the scallop stock in the Gulf Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission annually To monitor bay scallop populations in the state and maintain a plentiful breeding population, the Florida

THE CORE POPULATION

BIG BEND IS HOME TO

All images UF/IFAS file photos except when otherwise noted.

For more information about scallops, scallop research, and recreational harvesting of the Florida bay scallop, visit www.flseagrant.org

or contact
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www.taylor.ifas.ufl.edu



For information about accommodations and scallop excursions in the area:



Taylor County Chamber of Commerce
www.taylorcountychamber.com
(850) 584-5366

Taylor County Board of Commissioners
<http://www.taylorcountygov.com>
(850) 838-3500

For information about saltwater fishing, license requirements, open seasons, and limits, contact:



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
<http://myfwc.com>

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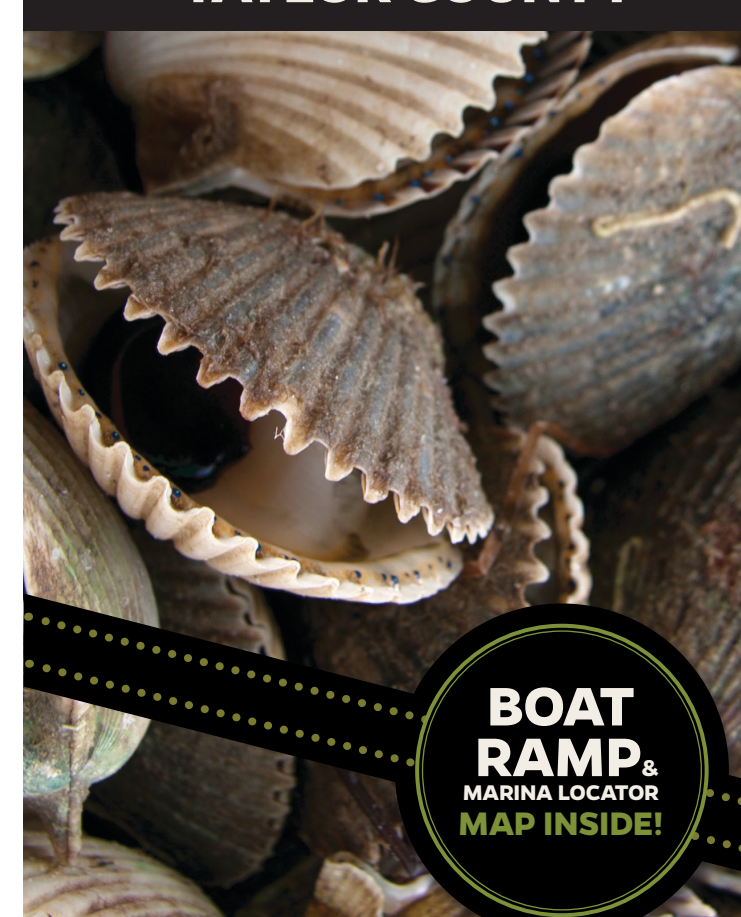
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The Florida bay scallop is a bivalve mollusk that lives in seagrass beds in relatively shallow water, usually 4 to 10 feet deep. At one time, scallops were reported from as far east as West Palm Beach and as far west as Pensacola. Today, populations can only be found in selected locations with expansive seagrass beds along Florida's west coast — principally in St. Joseph Bay, the Steinhatchee area of the Big Bend, and near the Crystal and Homosassa Rivers. Healthy seagrass meadows are essential for maintaining scallop populations, so remember to practice responsible boating, and avoid damaging the seagrass beds. Scallops live about one year before either dying off naturally or being eaten by humans, crabs, octopuses, or a variety of shell-crushing fish. They spawn primarily in the fall. After about a two-week period as plankton, larvae develop a small shell and settle onto seagrass blades. They continue to grow while attached to the grass blades by a mass of silk-like filaments called a byssus. They later fall from the grass blades and become free swimmers. Unlike oysters and clams, scallops are active swimmers. They click their shells together, forcing expelled water to propel them rapidly. Scallops are simultaneous hermaphrodites, able to spawn as either males or females, and very fertile. A single scallop can produce more than one million eggs per spawn.



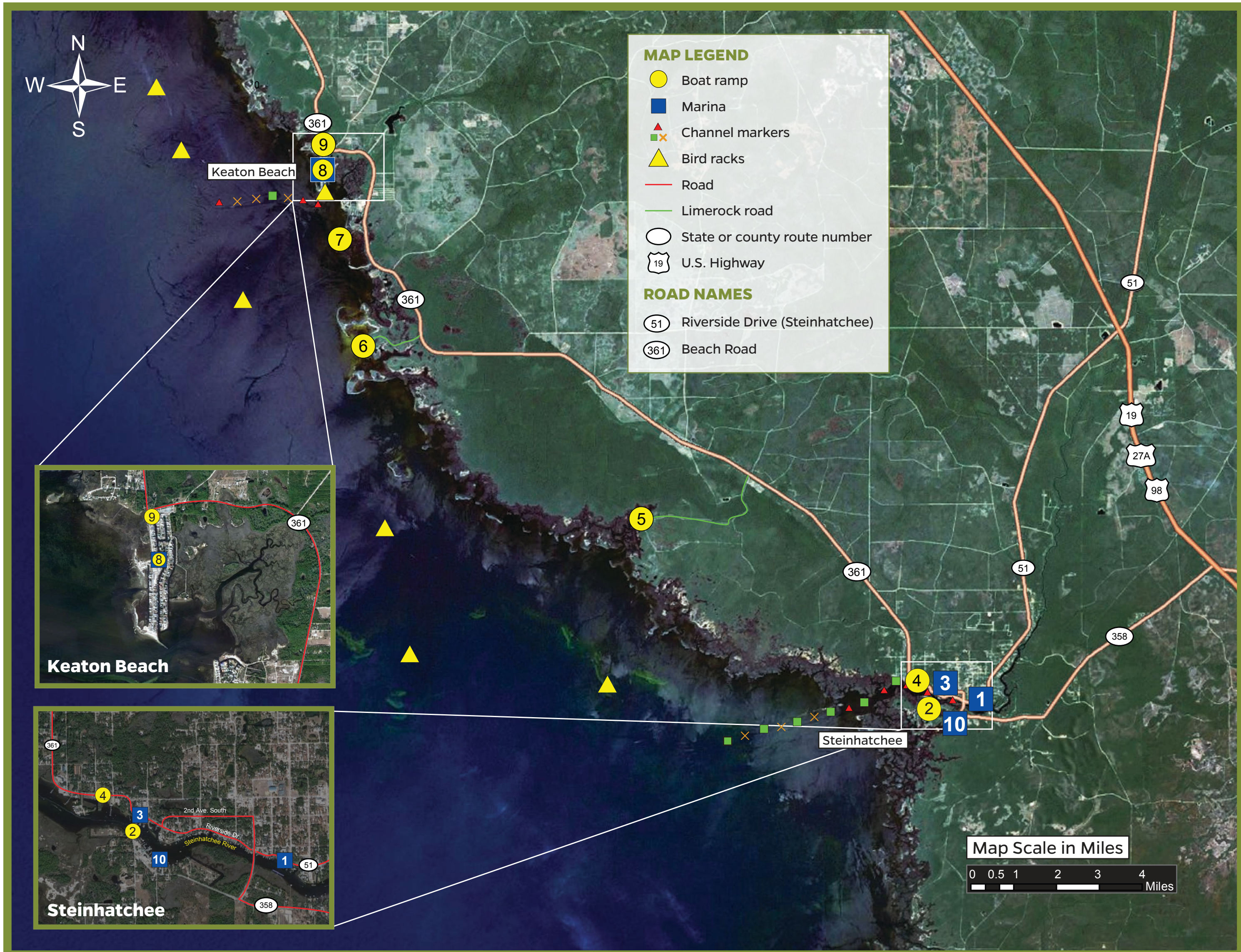
RECREATIONAL HARVESTING OF THE FLORIDA BAY SCALLOP

STEINHATCHEE AND KEATON BEACH AREAS, TAYLOR COUNTY



BOAT RAMP AND MARINA LOCATOR MAP FOR THE STEINHATCHEE AND KEATON BEACH AREAS

This guide to recreational scalloping includes educational information about scallops and scalloping. The boat ramp and marina locator map shows local water-access points in southern Taylor County near Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach. This map is not intended for navigational use. Channel markers may not be where shown, and navigability may be tide dependent. For navigational purposes, use NOAA nautical chart 11407, find certified printers, or view online at www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov.



BOAT RAMPS

- 2 Jena Ramp - West end of CR 358, Jena
- 4 Steinhatchee Boat Ramp (former site of Ideal Marina) - 100 1st Avenue SE, Steinhatchee
- 5 Dallus Creek Landing - West end of Dallus Creek Road, off CR 361 (**shallow draft boats only**)
- 6 Hagen's Cove Recreation Area - West end of Hagen's Cove Road, off CR 361 (**shallow draft boats only**)
- 7 Dark Island Boat Ramp - 22058 Dark Island Road, Dark Island (**shallow draft boats only**)
- 8 Keaton Beach Marina Boat Ramp - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
- 9 Keaton Beach Boat Ramp - 20131 Beach Road (CR 361), Keaton Beach

MARINAS

- 1 River Haven Marina - 1110 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
- 3 Sea Hag Marina - 322 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
- 8 Keaton Beach Marina - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
- 10 Good Times Marina - 7022 SW Hwy 358, Steinhatchee

*Scallops may be found in any location where seagrasses are present. Good places to begin searching are depths near the Bird Racks, but watch out for obstructions close to the positions located on the map.