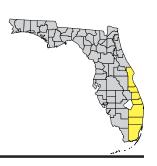# JOHNSON'S SEAGRASS

Halophila johnsonii Eiseman
Synonyms: none
Family: Hydrocharitaceae (frog's-bit)
FNAI Ranks: G2/S2
Legal Status: US–Threatened FL–none
Wetland Status: US–OBL FL–none

Gary Knight

Field Description: Submerged **sea grass** with long, delicate stems embedded in coastal sediments; a pair of leaves and a single root are borne on the stem at 0.5 - 2 inch intervals. **Leaves** 0.8 - 2 inches long (including leaf stalk), linear, hairless, with brown midrib and veins, and entire margins; two small scale leaves occur at the base of each leaf stalk. Vase-shaped **female flowers and fruits** at nodes, with 3 long, curving styles; male flowers have never been observed.

Similar Species: Caribbean seagrass or paddle-grass (*Halophila decipiens*) has oval or oblong leaves with toothed margins and microscopic prickle hairs on one or both leaf surfaces. Engelmann's seagrass (*Halophila engelmannii*) has 4 - 8 leaves at the ends of branches, with leaves up to 4 inches long.

Related Rare Species: None in FL.

Johnson's seagrass   *Halophila johnsonii*

Habitat: Tidal deltas inside inlets, sandy shoals, and mouths of canals; at water depths from shallow intertidal to 9 feet deep.

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to 120 miles of SE FL coastline from Sebastian Inlet in Brevard County to north Biscayne Bay in Dade County.

Conservation Status: Although federal and state laws aim to protect seagrass beds, there is continuing serious loss of these habitats. Because of small size and lack of sexual reproduction, Johnson's seagrass is especially vulnerable to disturbance. Only two populations occur on managed areas.

Protection & Management: Protect coastal waters and sediments from pollution, dredging, siltation, propellor disturbance, and shading by docks and jetties.

References: Bolen 1997, Durako and Wettstein 1994, Eiseman and McMillan 1980, Federal Register 2000, IRC 1999, NMFS 2000, Virnstein et al. 1997, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.