

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Boat captains and snorkelers needed for the seventh annual Pine Island Sound Scallop Search**

Fort Myers, FL, July 15, 2016 – Join Florida Sea Grant, UF/IFAS Lee County Extension and the Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation by participating in the 2016 Pine Island Sound Scallop Search, a resource-monitoring program in which volunteers snorkel, looking for scallops in select areas within Pine Island Sound.

The Aug. 6 event is sponsored by Lee County Parks & Recreation, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve and Pineland Marina.

**Purpose:** To monitor and document the health and status of the bay scallop population.

**How it works:** Up to 40 boats are needed with as many as 150 participants to search selected sites in Pine Island Sound and San Carlos Bay for the elusive “bay scallop.”

**History:** Large populations of bay scallops (or *Argopecten irradians*) disappeared from Southwest Florida waters decades ago due in large part to degraded water quality, related declines in seagrass acreage, over-harvesting and other causes. Water quality and seagrasses have improved in many areas to levels that may once again support these important bivalves. This event is modeled after the successful Great Bay Scallop Search conducted in Tampa Bay since 1993. Pine Island Sound’s inaugural event was in 2010.

**Need to know:** Reservations are required to participate in the event. Space is limited; reserve your spot now. Scallop searchers will meet at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, at Pineland Marina, 13921 Waterfront Drive, Pineland, FL, 33922, to receive survey equipment and instructions for the monitoring event. Lunch will be provided to participants once they return to shore and report information.

**\*\*\*\* NOTE: THIS IS A NO HARVEST EVENT \*\*\*\***

**Sea Grant is recruiting:**

- Volunteers with shallow-draft boats. Please let us know the style and size of your boat. Please bring a dive flag if you have one. Canoes and kayaks are also welcome, but sites are very limited; please sign up early. Personal watercraft (Jet Skis, Sea-Doos, etc.) are not allowed in the search.
- Please let us know how many additional people you can take aboard so we can pair you with additional volunteer snorkelers.
- Snorkelers without boats are welcome, however space is limited.
- Volunteers need to bring: mask, snorkel and gloves and be able to snorkel/swim 50 meters (about 150 feet) along the bottom—fins and weight belt are optional but suggested.
- Reservations are required. Survey sites and equipment are limited. The Scallop Search promises to be a popular event—so sign up early.

**Sign up today at <http://2016pineislandscallopsearch.eventbrite.com> or by emailing Joy at [hazellje@leegov.com](mailto:hazellje@leegov.com) or calling the Florida Sea Grant /Lee County Extension office at 239-533-7518.**

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*Note to media: Images available upon request. Email [hazellje@leegov.com](mailto:hazellje@leegov.com)*