



Station Policies and Use Agreement

GENERAL:

1. Each person using the Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory (SHKML), including boats and facilities, must sign a liability release form.
2. Each visitor understands the property of SHKML is used in cooperation with a Memorandum between the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the University of Florida, Seahorse Key being part of the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge. The visitor agrees to abide by rules of both the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the University of Florida.
3. Firearms are forbidden at the SHKML and island of Seahorse Key.
4. Domestic animals (dogs, etc.) are not permitted at Seahorse Key, unless they are part of an approved research project or are necessary to help a disabled person. Please notify the SHKML staff if you have a special need.
5. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted at Seahorse Key or on University of Florida boats.
6. Removal of plants, wildlife, or archeological artifacts is not permitted without a Special Use permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
7. There are no sanitation facilities on Seahorse Key. Any and all trash generated must be packed out when a visitor leaves the island. Plastic garbage bags will be provided for this purpose.
8. Use of the laboratory facilities and/or lodging facilities (historic lighthouse) requires the user to clean the affected spaces and leave the facilities as they were found.
9. Please note there are venomous snakes (cottonmouth, *Agkistrodon piscivorus*) that inhabit Seahorse Key and are sometimes seen in the open areas surrounding the buildings. Watch for snakes and do not molest them. These snakes are not aggressive unless you bother them. Due to the snake presence, visitors are required to carry a torch, wear shoes, and stay on paths if walking outside after dark. Rattlesnakes are also occasionally seen on the island, but they are not common.
10. Also be cautious about stingrays, which are present in surrounding waters. If in water, always wear sneakers and shuffle your feet when wading to avoid stingrays.
11. The interior of Seahorse Key is closed to public use for the safety of visitors and the protection of the flora and fauna. The only exceptions to this rule are the trail that leads east from the generator shed to the historic gravesites, or possession of a special use permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
12. During the period from March 1 to June 30, Seahorse Key is further restricted for protection of colonial nesting birds that form rookeries during this season. During this period persons are not allowed in the hammock, on beaches, or in marshes and waters immediately adjacent to the island. There is also a buffer zone wherein boats are excluded within a perimeter of 300 ft offshore.
13. Persons are not allowed to jump or dive from the dock or docking facilities, and swimming is not permitted at the dock or boat basin.
14. No fires are permitted on Seahorse Key except for cooking fires in the outside grill.

15. Orderliness in personal conduct and living habits is essential for comfort and good public relations. Please remember that Seahorse Key is part of a national wildlife refuge.

BOAT SAFETY:

1. No person may operate a boat without prior approval and check-out by a staff member of the SHKML. Users are required to sign in and out whenever a boat is used, listing full name, number in party, date, time, purpose of use, and location where boat is to be used.
2. Boats must be cleaned after use and the gas tanks refilled.
3. **Do not run boats in shallow water**, especially at low tide. Users are responsible if he/she burns up an engine due to neglect of this rule. You will need to be mindful of tide changes; so, if you get “stuck” in shallow water or mud, you must wade to shore or push the boat to deeper water. Running the engine in muddy shallows overheats and destroys the engine!
4. One skiff *must remain* at Seahorse Key whenever the laboratory staff is away from the island. This is especially important after normal staff working hours. This skiff is for **emergency use only**.
5. Canoes may be used only on the north side of the island. As with the boats, you must request permission, sign out the canoe, and indicate where you are going and for how long.
6. Laboratory boats may not be used for fishing, unless you have a specific permit related to your research. Fish and shellfish may not be collected for personal use.

USE OF THE LIGHTHOUSE LODGING FACILITIES:

1. The lighthouse living quarters are inside a building that is on the National Register of Historic Places. Please treat the building and the things within it with care, and do not tape or nail items to the walls. Visitors are permitted to climb the staircase to the light turret, but no more than four average-size persons may do so at the same time.
2. Please do not leave perishables inside the refrigerator when you leave the island, unless you have prior permission from the SHKML staff. Please do not allow wet or smelly items (e.g., fish) to “soil” the insides of refrigerators.
3. Do not remove furniture from rooms or buildings.
4. Be considerate of others, and do not allow screen doors to slam. Walk quietly while others might be sleeping.
5. Do not remove kitchen utensils, cutlery, glasses, etc. from the kitchen or dining area. Pots and pans are not to be used as buckets for holding or collecting organisms.
6. Always clean up your dishes or glasses *immediately* after they are used.
7. Do not leave valuable personal items exposed in your rooms.
8. All garbage and trash should be put in the garbage containers or large trashcans in the west kitchen.
9. Empty bottles and cans should be deposited in a container lined with a trash bag.

10. Shirts are required at all meals.

11. Water conservation is essential. Please try to use water efficiently in showering, dishwashing and cleanup. Conserve shower water by wetting yourself first, turning off the water, lathering up, and then rinsing quickly. Please clean up following fieldwork by using the hose by the laboratory steps or the tank spigot at the west end of the lighthouse instead of showering.

12. There is potable water from wells available from the kitchen spigots. However, the quality of water may vary during drought periods, and visitors may wish to bring their own drinking water.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CONDUCT OF RESEARCH:

1. Student research projects require a UF faculty member sponsor and must be approved by the Director of the SHKML.

2. All users must comply with all applicable University regulations (e.g., IACUC) and state or federally required permits.

3. All equipment, flagging, field apparatus, etc., must be removed from the island at the conclusion of the project.

4. All researchers must provide on an annual basis the title of any research project, source of funding, and a brief abstract that describes the research.

5. All publications resulting from the use of the SHKML must acknowledge the University of Florida and the Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory. Please submit two copies of all publications to the SHKML Director.

6. The Director must also be informed of any and all reports, abstracts, meeting presentations of the research associated with the SHKML. These and items #4 and 5 are required for reporting purposes and the SHKML annual report.

Our staff is dedicated to helping you have a safe and successful stay at Seahorse Key. Please interact courteously and observe all rules and suggestions you might be told.

I understand that by signing this form I agree to comply with the above policies of the Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory. The SHKML administrators reserve the right to change any of these policies at any time.

Name (print)

Signature

Date

Emergency calls: Daytime, call our cellular phone at (352) 222-3014.
Evenings, call Mr. Henry Coulter in Cedar Key (352) 543-5508

