Last week, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) announced Florida has reached the threshold of 1 million registered boats by recreational users. If you add in the number of commercial boats for charters, flats guides, trap fishers, and pleasure cruises, that equals a ton of boats out on the water! Everyone needs a driver’s license to drive a car legally, but unbelievably, there is very little required to operate a boat – or even rent one! In 2020, Monroe County ranked #1 for the number of boating accidents, followed by Miami-Dade. Of course, we have a lot of coastline and we can boat year around; however, knowing how to safely operate a boat and having the necessary safety equipment can prevent accidents and save lives.

Luckily, the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and Key West Power Squadron offer in-person classes regularly. There are also online options from Boat US that are free and you can take the course at home, at your own pace. Anyone born in 1988 or after is required to take a boater safety course and have a boat safety ID card – this means if you are under 34 years of age you need to take a boater safety course if operating a powerboat over 10 horsepower. Links to FWC-approved boating courses https://myfwc.com/boating/safety-education/courses/.

...Continued on page 3
Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:

- Shelly presented preliminary results of the EPA-funded sponge nitrogen cycling and sponge gardening experiments to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program. Shelly also had a virtual poster at the University of Florida Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences graduate student symposium about sponges and nitrogen dynamics in the Florida Keys.

- Shelly taught students at College of the Florida Keys about sponge restoration, sargassum composting, and stony coral tissue loss disease as part of the marine policy seminar series and the US Dive Club, South Florida Chapter about sargassum. Shelly gave the bi-monthly updates to the Florida Coral Disease coordination teams about stony coral tissue loss disease communications. Shelly presented to the new Master Gardener course about volunteer opportunities.

- Shelly recently accomplished the following activities:
  - Shelly presented preliminary results of the EPA-funded sponge nitrogen cycling and sponge gardening experiments to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program. Shelly also had a virtual poster at the University of Florida Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences graduate student symposium about sponges and nitrogen dynamics in the Florida Keys.
  - Shelly taught students at College of the Florida Keys about sponge restoration, sargassum composting, and stony coral tissue loss disease as part of the marine policy seminar series and the US Dive Club, South Florida Chapter about sargassum. Shelly gave the bi-monthly updates to the Florida Coral Disease coordination teams about stony coral tissue loss disease communications. Shelly presented to the new Master Gardener course about volunteer opportunities.
  - Shelly is helping to plan a Restoration Aquaculture symposium at the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center that will bring together state, local, and federal agencies as well as nonprofit organizations to discuss policy, permitting, and restoration aquaculture techniques for the state of Florida.

Michelle recently accomplished the following activities:

- The Environmental Horticulture Program was awarded a $3,000 Community Foundation of the Florida Keys Collaborative Grant to help families of the Keys learn to grow their own food through demonstration gardens, planting workshops, and other outreach at Grimal Grove in Big Pine Key.

- Michelle and the Master Gardener Volunteers gave a planting demonstration workshop in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity of the Lower Keys at Moss Landing Residential Community in Cudjoe. Residents learned proper planting techniques to create a more resilient landscape.

- The 2022 Master Gardener Interns took a field trip up to the Miami-Dade Extension Office and the Tropical Research & Educational Center for continued training to better serve the residents of Monroe County. Participants learned about plant pathology, tropical fruit care and maintenance, and propagation techniques.
Alicia recently accomplished the following activities:

- Alicia co-taught a train-the-trainer workshop for 19 sustainability directors and extension agents to learn how to develop a local Climate Smart Floridians program. Of those that responded to the survey, 100% reported that they will use the material in their job and 90% thought the training was excellent or good.

- Alicia presented the history of Cooperative Extension and Monroe County Extension to the Master Gardener trainees.

- Alicia participated in community resource development activities including developing state-wide indicators, district-level training and resources for Extension directors.

- Alicia spoke on the radio about how to find resources for starting a side-gig including these blogs
  
  https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/m одное/co/2018/09/10/tips-to-start-a-side-gig/


When you own a boat, you know there is a lot of required safety equipment, and it is a good idea to make sure periodically it is all up to date and in working order. On a friend’s boat, ask if they have the required safety equipment since safety is a priority and a visit from law enforcement can result in pricey fines.

Kayakers and stand-up paddle boarders (SUPs) – there are also requirements for you. While on the water on your kayaks and SUPs, you need to have a lifejacket and a noisemaking device on-board. Place a whistle on your personal floatation device and that will suffice. Between dusk and dawn, a flashlight or headlamp must be on to alert other boaters of your location. Keep in mind boats do not have brakes, so avoid loitering in navigation channels. Boats need time to stop and navigation channels in the Florida Keys are very narrow, typically with seagrasses and shallow water on both sides.

- Flares expire about every 42 months (~3.5 years). Make sure yours are not expired. Three unexpired flares are required on boats 16 feet and over in length. You can keep the old expired flares onboard, but they do not count toward the required 3 unexpired flares! Monroe County Sheriffs’ office will accept expired flares. Do not dispose of in household waste since they are a fire hazard.

- 1 life jacket per person, and 1 throwable floatation device. Kids under 6 should wear a lifejacket

- Kayaks and stand up paddle boards – must have lifejacket, whistle, and a flashlight/headlamp between dusk and dawn.

- Boats over 26 feet need to have a fire extinguisher.

- Bow riding is not recommended since it is very, very dangerous (but it is not technically illegal)

- Boaters must maintain a distance of at least 300 feet from divers-down flags on open waters --- that is the distance of a football field!! and at least 100 feet from flags on rivers, inlets or navigation channels.

Boaters must slow down their speed around snorkelers, divers and swimmers. A diver down flag is required from a vessel when there are snorkelers or divers in the water. When diving independent of a vessel, a buoy can be used. Even if you are not required to take a boater safety course, it is a good idea and can be completed usually in less than 3 hours online.

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UF/IFAS/MCES QUARTERLY CONTACTS

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2022 Extension Business Professionals Conference

Photos Above:
Extension Coordinator, Brynn Morey, traveled to Gainesville to attend the Extension Business Professionals Conference where she met with other Extension professionals and toured the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences.