Mooring Buoys

The moorings are strong but are designed for use by small to medium-size boats, up to 40 feet in length, in relatively calm weather. The use of mooring buoys has gained acceptance as an effective coral reef protection method. It is estimated that coral reef managers have installed more than 6,000 mooring buoys worldwide.

In Palm Beach County, the buoys are maintained by the Department of Environmental Resources Management. For more information or to report a problem concerning the buoys, please call 561-233-2400.

1. Have your boat hook and bow-line ready.
2. Pass your bow-line through the eye of the pick-up line.
3. Retrieve the pick-up line with your boat hook.
4. Inspect the buoy as you approach. Make sure the mooring is in good shape before you tie off.
5. Pay your boat hook and bow-line around the buoy. Tie off securely.
6. It is important to pay out extra scope in rough weather. Pass your bow-line through the eye of the pick-up line and pay your boat hook and bow-line around the buoy. Tie off securely.
7. Always use a separate bow-line from your boat to the mooring buoy pick-up line.
8. Use the mooring buoys at your own risk. Palm Beach County assumes no responsibility for use of the buoys.
9. Someone who knows how to operate the boat should always remain on board. As the boat operator, you are responsible for the safety of your boat and passengers.
10. To leave the buoy, untie one end of your bow-line and let it slip free of the pick-up line.

How Can You Help?

To help with the long-term maintenance of Palm Beach County’s mooring buoys go to www.pbcgov.com/erm and click on “Donate Today” or donate to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida at 1-800-988-4889 or visit www.wildlifefoundationofflorida.com/buoys.

The Mooring Buoy Program was made possible by grants from the Florida Boating Improvement and State Wildlife Grant programs through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, private donations, and funds from vessel registration fees.

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See the map inside for mooring buoy locations.

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Using the Buoys

1. Have your boat hook and bow-line ready.
2. Carefully approach the buoy from down wind or current.
3. Inspect the buoy as you approach. Make sure the mooring is in good shape before you tie off.
4. Retrieve the pick-up line with your boat hook.
5. Pass your bow-line through the eye of the pick-up line. Put out extra scope and cleat the bow-line off securely.
6. It is important to put out extra scope in rough weather.
7. Never tie your boat directly to the mooring buoy pick-up line as you may damage your boat and place too much strain on the mooring.
8. Someone who knows how to operate the boat should always remain onboard. As the boat operator, you are responsible for the safety of your boat and passengers.
9. To leave the buoy, untie one end of your bow-line and let it slip free of the pick-up line.
10. Retrieve your bow-line and maneuver slowly until you are clear of the buoys and other boaters.

Never tie off directly to the mooring buoy pick-up line.
The Palm Beach County Mooring Buoy System was established to protect Palm Beach County’s shallow reefs from damage by boat anchors. The buoys allow boaters, divers, and fishermen to tie their vessels to a mooring buoy instead of dropping anchors on the reef. Boat anchors can cause major damage to reefs.

Mooring buoys are present in five locations county wide. The stainless steel u-shaped anchors are installed in 24-inch deep by 2-inch wide holes along the ocean floor in depths ranging from 12 feet to 30 feet. Buoys will be regularly rotated to different pins at Boca and Mar-A-Lago to reduce extended periods of stress on areas of reef due to the moorings.

Each buoy is designed to handle only one boat.

Overnight docking is not allowed.

Buoy use is free and “first come first serve.”