*tii* beneath docks in St. Andrew Bay, FL. They noted bare areas from 35–78 inches in diameter around pilings, ”even though the age of these docks varied widely” suggesting that regrowth is affected by the presence of pilings. Use of high pressure jetting produced a six- to seven-foot diameter hole around each piling, which was then backfilled to hold the piling in place. The resultant “halo” might remain for 10 years without seagrass regrowth. The authors found that where piles were installed using low-pressure jetting techniques there was, “little or no sand deposition around the pilings and the remaining seagrasses around the pilings looked healthy and had good growth around the piling.”

Dock construction also impacts marsh grass. Sanger and Holland (2002) noted a barren path through the marsh along each side of a newly constructed dock in North Carolina where vegetation had been almost totally destroyed. However, construction did not appreciably alter the original marsh elevations. Resurveying the site 15 months later, the researchers found that *Spartina. alterniflora* had recolonized the area and substantial recovery had occurred.

## *Chronic Impacts from Shading—*

Both marsh grasses and sea grasses have adapted to living in extended periods of sunlight. Therefore, shading can have significant impacts on the health and productivity of these plants. Figure 1 illustrates some of the potential impacts from dock shading. Two thresholds are shown; the minimum amount of light necessary for the plant to reach full growth, and the minimum amount of light for the plant to sustain itself. Below the first threshold, plants are stunted in growth or grow tall and spindly in an attempt to reach sunlight. Below the second threshold, plants die.

Generated

**Figure 1.** Light Profile under a dock (From Nightengale and Simenstad 2001. Ron Thom, pers. comm.). The graph illustrates how the shading of an east-west oriented dock affects light levels and vegetation growth below a dock in Washington state. The two horizontal lines indicate the light levels necessary for full, unaffected growth of plants (Minimum light needed for full growth) and the amount of light for plants to live (Minimum light for plant maintenance). Note that much of the area beneath the illustrated dock is below the threshold for plant life. Note also that the shading is somewhat offset to the north due to the declination of the sun.

Amount of Light Required by Vegetation—

Susceptibility to shading varies by species, even those occupying similar habitats. For example, in marsh grasses, densities of *Spartina patens* (Salt Meadow Grass or Salt Hay Grass) and *Distichlis spicata* (Spike Grass or Salt Grass) are more sensitive than *Spartina alterniflora* (Smooth Cordgrass or Saltwater Coordgrass) (Kearney *et al.* 1983).

Light levels necessary for plants to sustain themselves generally range between 12–25 percent of ambient light, depending on the species. Specifically for seagrasses, a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Technical Memorandum reports that “the light requirements of temperate and tropical seagrasses are very similar” requiring “at least 15 to 25% of the incident light just for maintenance” (Kenworthy and Haunert, 1991). Light requirements are presumably higher to allow full growth but there has been limited research that provides specific percentages.

NMFS’ summary report is supported by studies on individual seagrass species. For example, Shaefer and Robinson (2001) report that light levels of 13–14 percent of mean daily surface irradiance (SI) are necessary for survival of the seagrass *Halodule wrightii*. Shaefer (1999) found that seagrass densities were 40–47 percent less in areas shaded at levels of 16–19 percent SI. Burdick and Short (1999) observed similar trends in the eelgrass, *Zostera marina,* which required light levels of at least 15 percent of surface irradiance for survival and approximately 50–60 percent for healthy beds.

## Direct Impacts of Shading—

As we have already demonstrated, marsh and submerged aquatic vegetation need adequate light levels to survive and flourish. Therefore shading from docks can have significant implications for this vegetation. Recent studies have shown that shoot density, biomass, and overall plant growth may be reduced by dock shading (Sanger and Holland, 2002; McGuire, 1990; Burdick and Short, 1999). In some instances, researchers found an increase in the height of marsh grasses found under docks, possibly due to etiolation. (Etiolation is a condition in which plants growing in reduced light levels elongate much more rapidly than normal as a means of reaching light. It is characterized by long weak stems and small leaves.)

Generated

**Figure 2.** Eelgrass density was significantly lower under and near docks than at sites removed from the dock by various distances (Burdick and Short, 1999).

Impacts due to shading also appear in fresh waters. Garrison *et al.* (2005) investigated shading impacts on submerged vegetation and relationships to fish and invertebrate habitats. They found significant shading under docks “with a corresponding reduction in aquatic plant abundance” in Wisconsin lakes. By placing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Concentrations of CCA Wood TreatmentsRecommended for Various Uses | |
| Retentions *(lbs./cu.ft.)* | Uses/Exposures |
| 0.10 – 0.25  0.21 – 0.41  0.31– 0.61  2.50 | Above ground  Soil & Freshwater use  Permanent Wood Foundation  Saltwater use |



