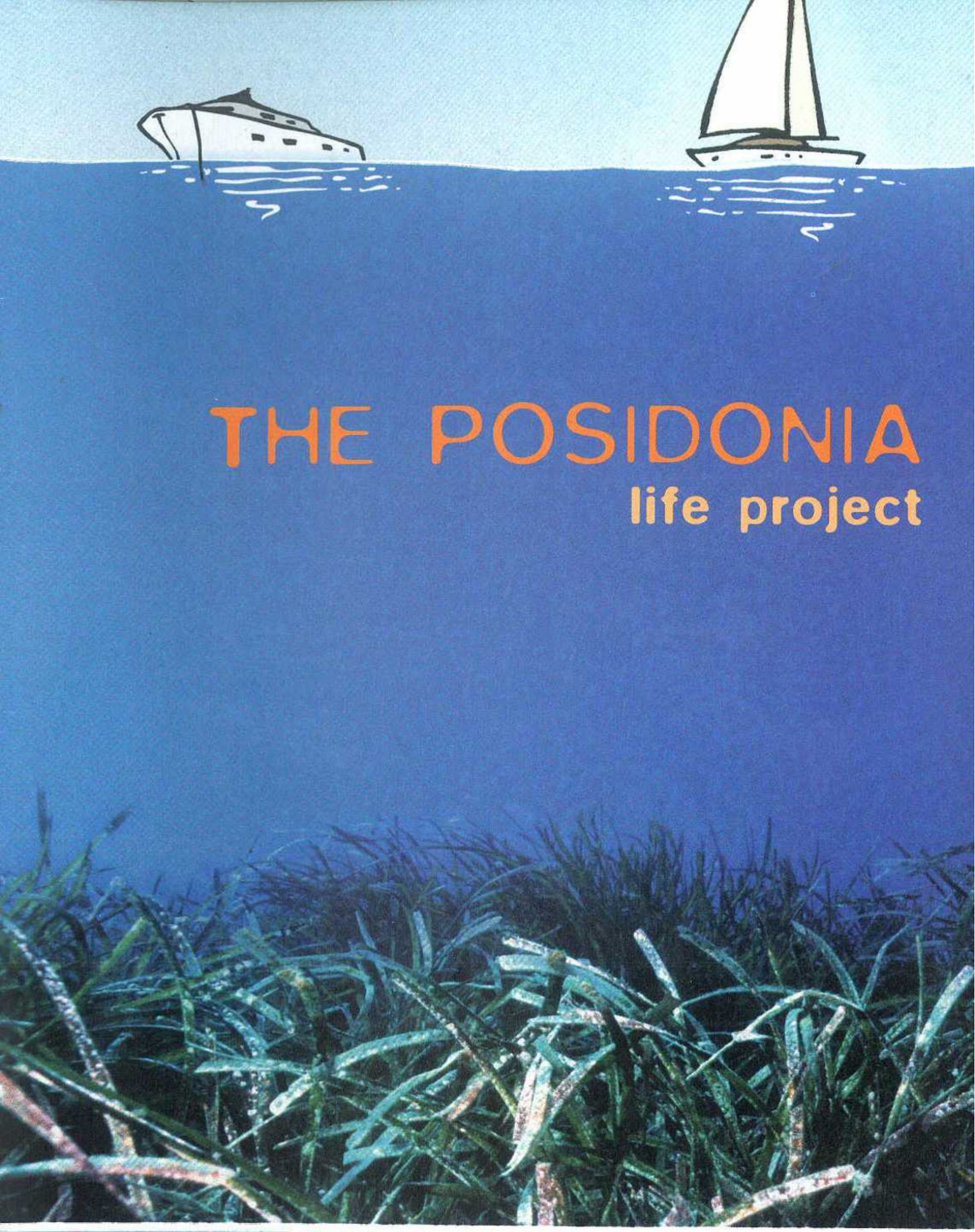


THE POSIDONIA
life project

Govern de les Illes Balears

UNIÓ EUROPEA

Conselleria de Medi Ambient >Direcció General de Caça, Protecció d'Espècies i Educació Ambiental

Life Posidonia

THE POSIDONIA LIFE PROJECT

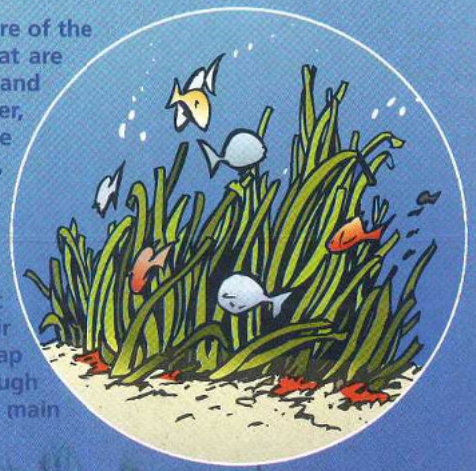
The *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass is a marine plant that lives only in the Mediterranean Sea, where it forms extensive underwater meadows. The areas and habitats occupied by these meadows are diminishing, due to increasing urban occupation of Mediterranean shores.

The Department of the Environment of the Government of the Balearic Islands, aware of the natural heritage that Posidonia meadows represent and of the need to protect them, has prepared and launched, with the participation of the General Direction of Fisheries, the Bosch i Gimpera Foundation and the Mediterranean Institute of Advanced Studies, the project entitled "Protection of Posidonia meadows in Balearic sites of Community importance (SCI)".

This project receives European funding, as decided by the European Commission on the 5th of July 2001, within the context of LIFE (legislation regulating financial aid for the environment).

THE BENEFITS OF POSIDONIA

Posidonia meadows increase the spatial structure of the sea bottom, producing a diversity of habitats that are colonised by various life forms. Numerous plant and animal species find in them protection and shelter, place for spawning and reproduction, a substrate to grow upon, and their source of nourishment, thus forming as a whole a community with high species richness.



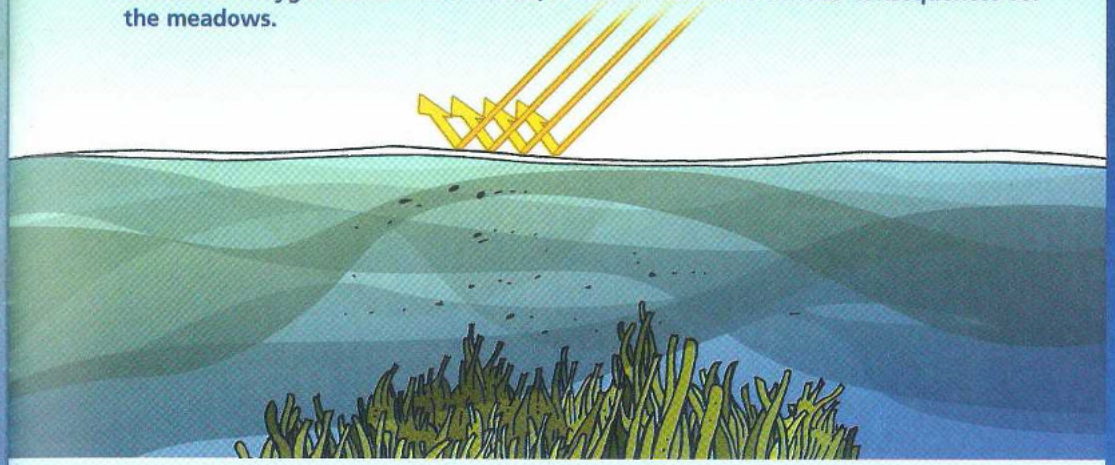
In addition, these meadows play an important ecological role in their environment. They are net producers of organic matter and oxygen for their surroundings, participate in water purification, trap sediments, contribute to beach protection through wave buffering, and in the Balearic Islands are the main source of sand.

THREATS

-SEAWATER POLLUTION

A large part of the residues originating from human activity end up in the sea, either directly or indirectly, and can produce different impacts on the Posidonia meadows.

Empty bottles, plastics, scrap, etc. pollute the sea bottom. Sediments incoming from the coast (sewage discharge, dumping, etc.) increase water turbidity, diminishing the amount of light available for the plants. Sewage and fertilisers lead to an increase in the levels of nutrients and organic matter. Oxidation of the latter reduces the amount of oxygen dissolved in water, and can thus have serious consequences for the meadows.



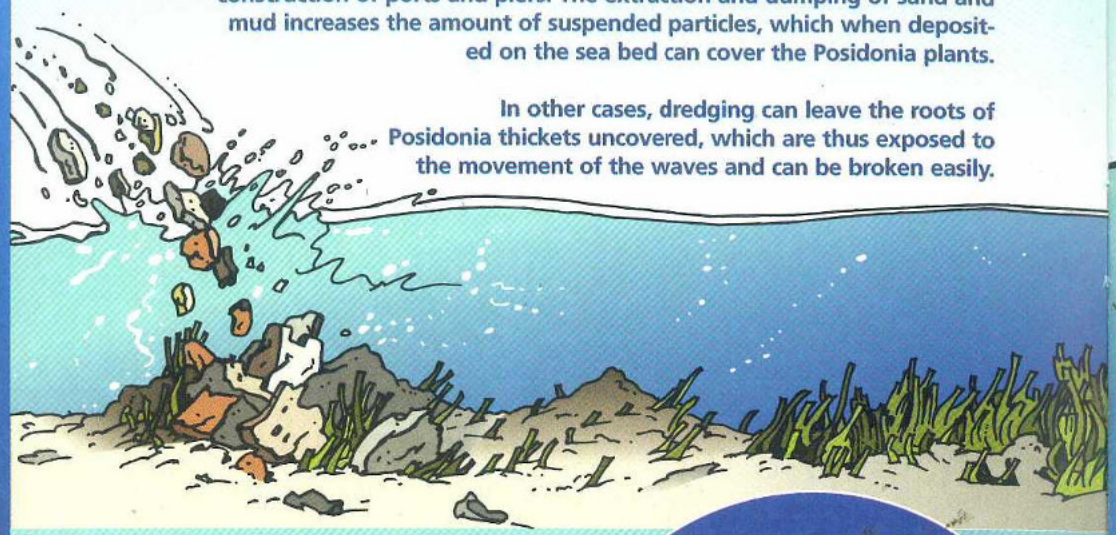
-TRAWL FISHING

Fishing by trawlers and similar ships on the meadows is illegal and harmful. It causes the opening of clearings in the meadows, due to the ripping up of large quantities of leaf bundles, and even entire thickets. It also increases water turbidity, as it stirs up sediments, thus diminishing the amount of light reaching the plant.

-DREDGING

Many activities are carried out on the coast, such as dredging for the construction of ports and piers. The extraction and dumping of sand and mud increases the amount of suspended particles, which when deposited on the sea bed can cover the Posidonia plants.

In other cases, dredging can leave the roots of Posidonia thickets uncovered, which are thus exposed to the movement of the waves and can be broken easily.



-ANCHORING

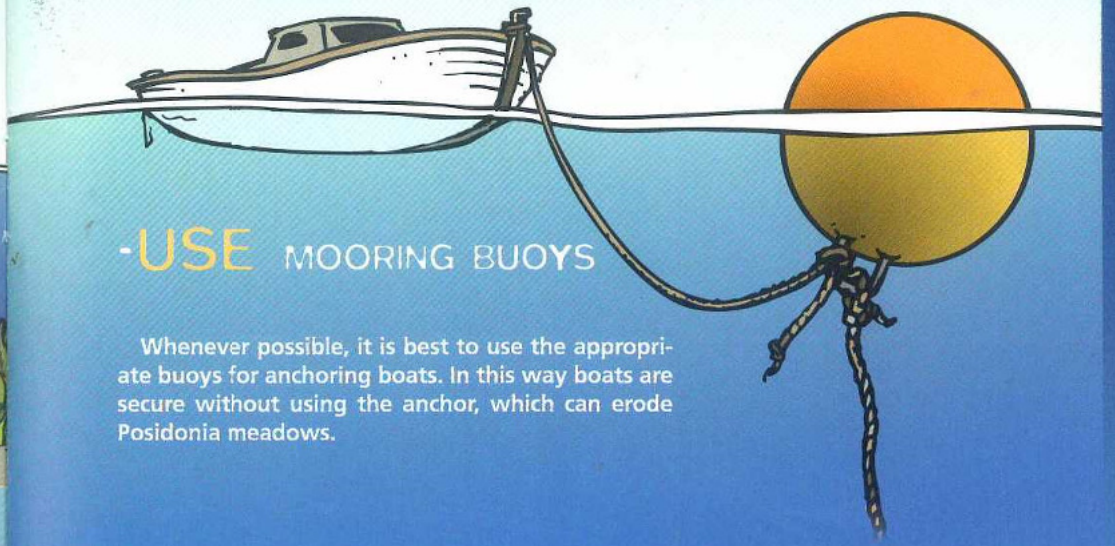
Permanent

The chains of permanent anchorage sites continuously drag over Posidonia, ploughing through the meadows, stripping off leaves and branches, and eventually opening clearings.

Occasional

In the coves and bays protected from the movement of waves, which are the most frequented by boats, the mechanical action of anchors ripping out leaves and rhizomes can lead to the unearthing of Posidonia thickets.

GOOD PRACTICES

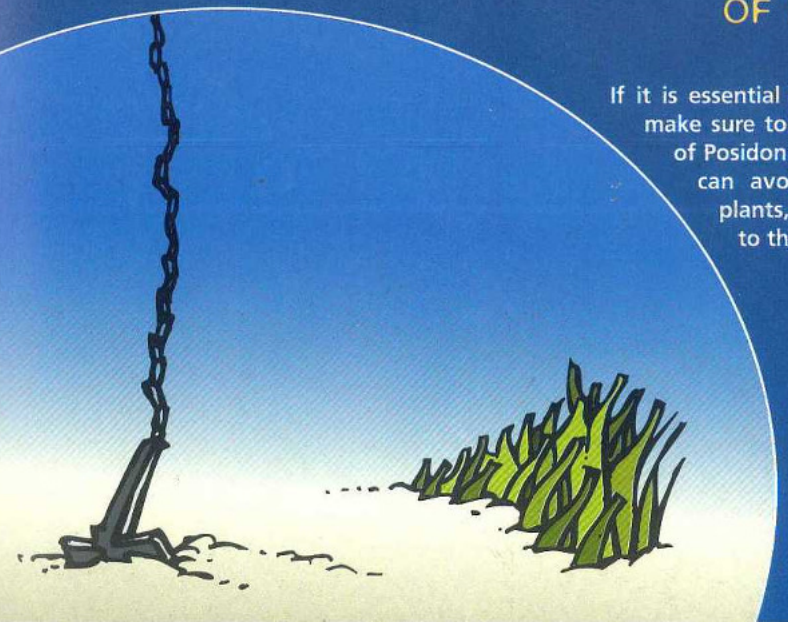


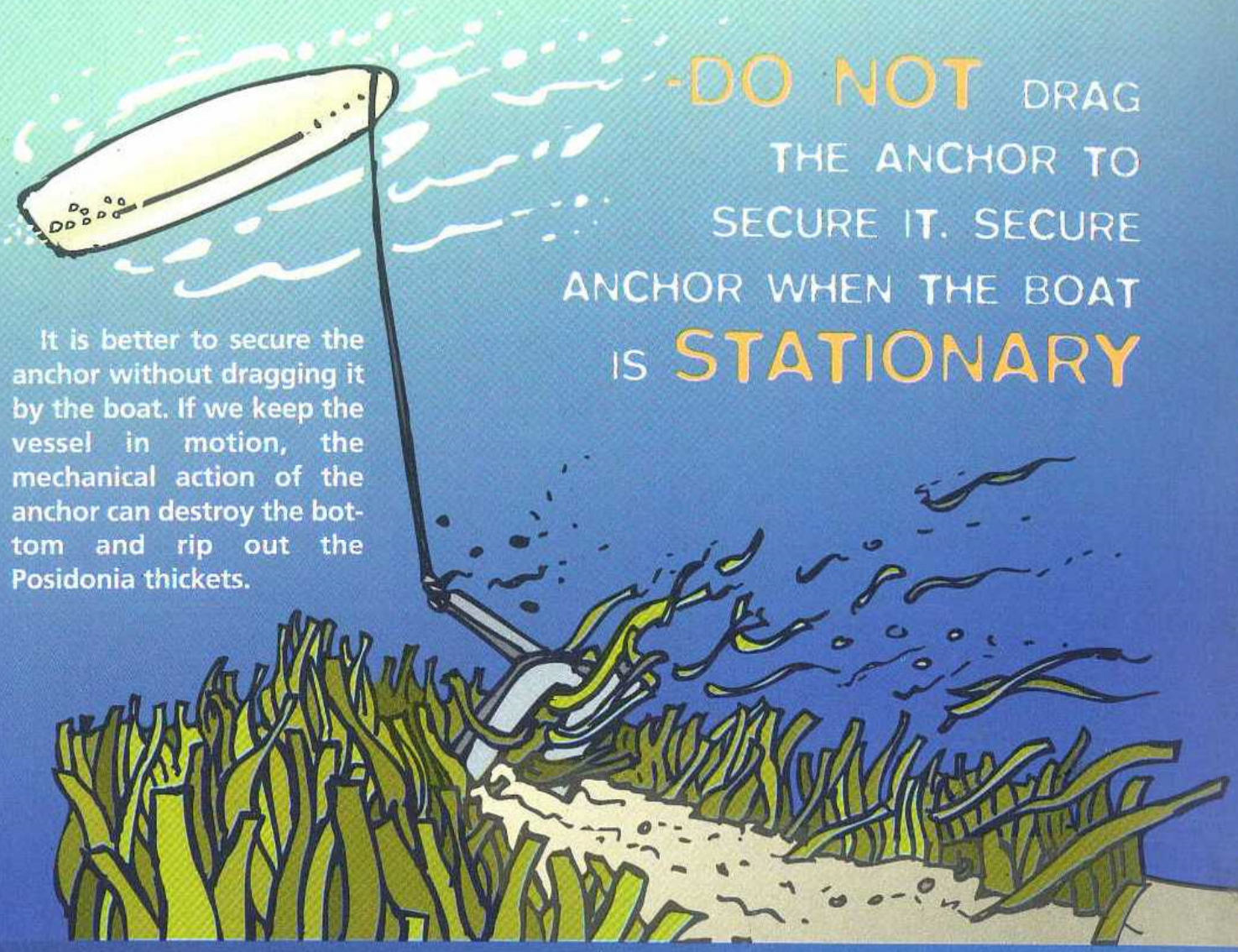
-USE MOORING BUOYS

Whenever possible, it is best to use the appropriate buoys for anchoring boats. In this way boats are secure without using the anchor, which can erode Posidonia meadows.

-ANCHORING IN AREAS DEPRIVED OF POSIDONIA

If it is essential to use an anchor, make sure to choose areas free of Posidonia. In this way one can avoid damaging the plants, thus contributing to their conservation.





-DO NOT DRAG THE ANCHOR TO SECURE IT. SECURE ANCHOR WHEN THE BOAT IS STATIONARY

It is better to secure the anchor without dragging it by the boat. If we keep the vessel in motion, the mechanical action of the anchor can destroy the bottom and rip out the Posidonia thickets.

Department of the Environment
General Direction of Hunting, Species Protection and Environmental Education

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