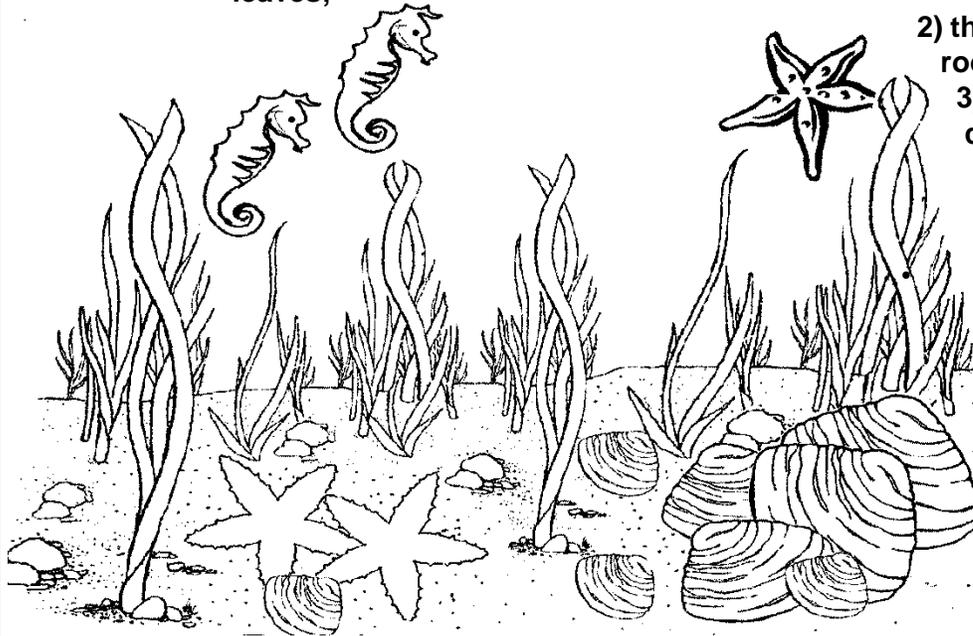




Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Seagrasses are grass-like flowering plants that live completely submerged in marine and estuarine waters. Florida's approximately 2 million acres of seagrasses perform many significant functions:

1) they help maintain water clarity by trapping fine sediments and particles with their leaves;



2) they stabilize the bottom with their roots and underground stems;

3) they provide shelter for fishes, crustaceans, and shellfish; and

4) they and the organisms that grow on them are food for many marine animals and water birds.

The canopy of seagrass leaves protects young marine animals from larger predators. Some animals, such as manatees and sea turtles, eat seagrass blades. Other animals derive nutrition from eating algae and small animals that live on the seagrass leaves.