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BAY REFLECTIONS

News from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

Summer 2021

Sarasota Bay Water Quality Updates



Cyanobacteria bloom in Anna Maria Sound, Credit: Holmes Beach Mayor Judy Titsworth

This spring and summer have brought challenges to bay restoration efforts. SBEP and our partners have worked to monitor and analyze multiple ecosystem disturbances, from the Piney Point emergency wastewater release to an ongoing and patchy red tide bloom. As part of this effort, SBEP's Executive Director, Dr. Dave Tomasko, has written periodic updates on water quality in Sarasota Bay. These updates, along with photos and videos, are now available on our website. If you would like to receive email updates as we continue to monitor Sarasota Bay, click on the link below.

Click here to read Sarasota Bay water quality updates >

Click here for updates on Piney Point from our partners at the Tampa Bay Estuary Program >

Watch the Red Tide Forum



SBEP and TBEP Executive Directors Dr. Dave Tomasko and Ed Sherwood presented to a large audience for the Red Tide Forum hosted by Suncoast and Tampa Bay Waterkeepers on July 23, 2021. Click the video link above to watch the recording on Manatee Educational Television's YouTube channel.

Water Quality Matters for Seagrass



Seagrass meadows declined by 2,313 acres, or 18%, baywide between 2018-2020. The largest losses occurred in northern Sarasota Bay. Red tide blooms are implicated in the losses.



Poor water quality is the most significant threat to seagrasses, but physical damage harms meadows too. SBEP recently installed thirteen signs at local boating hotspots to raise awareness about propeller scarring.

Read about seagrass decline in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune >

Read about propeller scarring in the Longboat Observer >

Ways to Support Bay Health at Home

Take action by evaluating your nutrient footprint, learning how to reduce it, and encouraging your families, friends, and neighbors to do the same. Here are some resources to help you get started:

- 8 Simple Ways to Reduce Personal Nutrient Pollution
- 10 Ways to Improve Water Quality in Your Community

Eyes on Seagrass Volunteers Collect Valuable Data in Sarasota Bay





SBEP uses multiple measurements, or indicators, of bay health to assess the overall ecological condition of our estuaries. Some indicators, like seagrass coverage and total nitrogen concentration, have a long period of record that we can use to assess bay health over time. Other indicators, however, have patchier datasets. In recent years, interest in seaweeds, or macroalgae, as a barometer of bay health has grown. Yet seaweeds have not been consistently monitored throughout SBEP's study area.

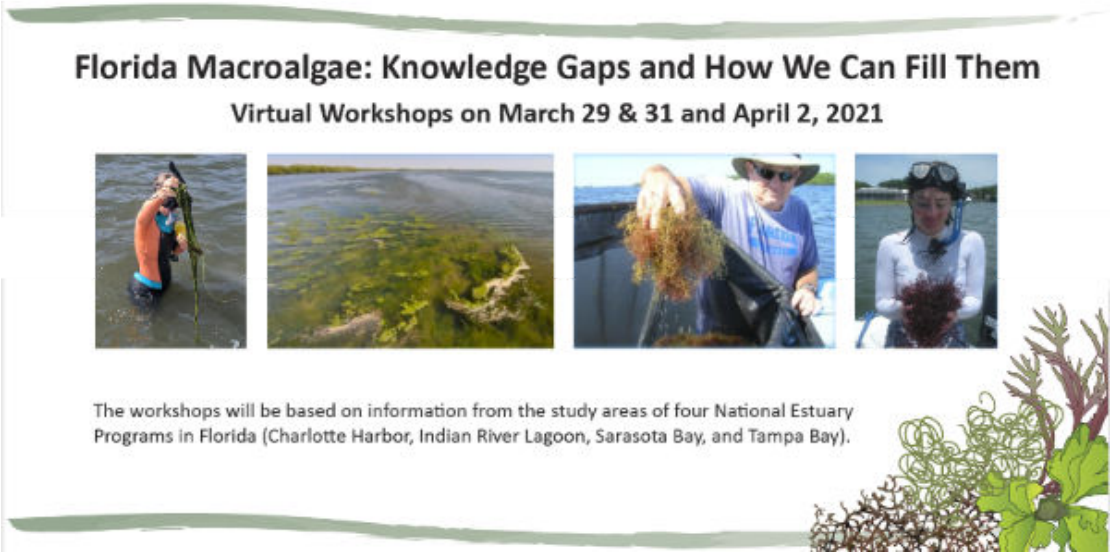
To fill this data gap, SBEP turned to community science. We recently adopted the Eyes on Seagrass volunteer monitoring program that was originally developed by Florida Sea Grant in Charlotte Harbor. The program is similar to the annual Sarasota County Seagrass Survey with an additional focus on seaweeds and a broader geographic scope.

In June, SBEP intern Race Stryker trained volunteers to collect macroalgae and seagrass data. Volunteers successfully sampled 38 sites in Sarasota Bay

and surrounding embayments. SBEP will use the data volunteers collected to build a new indicator of bay health for the Sarasota Bay report card. Race wrapped up his internship last week. Now he's off to graduate school in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Bon voyage, Race!

Interested in volunteering for the next round of Eyes on Seagrass in spring 2022? Contact Darcy Young at darcy@sarasotabay.org.

Watch the 2021 Florida Macroalgae Workshop



Recordings of the 2021 Florida Macroalgae Workshop are now available to watch on the SBEP website. Click through to view expert presentations on estuarine science by scientists from Florida and further afield.

Watch recordings of the 2021 Florida Macroalgae Workshop >

Habitat Restoration Update

Four years ago, SBEP constructed a series of four artificial oyster reefs on the east side of Sarasota Bay, south of 34th St. in Bradenton. To create each reef, old (non-living) shells in coconut fiber bags were placed to create a reef perimeter, and additional shell was deposited in the center. Old shells offer a place for live oysters to settle and eventually expand the reef. Recent results from reef monitoring showed positive results for oyster growth in 2021. After installation in 2017, oyster colonization and growth progressed during 2018,

then declined by 84% during 2019, and rebounded by 2021 with both horizonal and vertical growth. There were also more large oysters on the reefs in 2021 compared to previous years.

Oyster reefs teem with life, from marine snails that deposit egg cases in the reef's crevices to fish and birds that forage for prey in these vibrant habitats. SBEP is excited about the success of this reef and plans to continue monitoring into the future.







Click here to explore more SBEP habitat projects on Google Earth >

Climate Stories Showcased at the Sarasota Film Festival

Members of the Climate Council of Sarasota-Manatee, including the City of Sarasota, SBEP, and the Science and Environment Council, recently

premiered a series of four short films at the Sarasota Film Festival this past May. This locally-shot series aims to bring climate change issues and solutions closer to home. The films explore how increasing temperatures, sea level rise, and changes in rainfall impact agriculture, youth sports, coastal neighborhoods, and historic communities. Each story demonstrates first-hand local climate change experiences and highlights what individuals and communities can do to adapt and reduce impacts.









This series was created with support from a Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium Gulf of Mexico Climate and Resilience Community of Practice grant.

Click here to watch the films and download the rack cards >

Click here to watch the Sarasota Film Festival panel discussion >

2021 Bay Partners Grant Awardees

SBEP awarded over $50,000 in Sarasota Bay Partners Grants to local organizations for restoration and education projects that will benefit Sarasota Bay. Click below to read about this year's awardees.

2021 Sarasota Bay Partners Grants Awards >



North Sarasota Youth Learn about Sarasota Bay at Multicultural Health Institute's STEAMH Camp

In June, SBEP joined STEAMH (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math, and Health) camp and worked with 40 students from Manatee & Sarasota counties in learning about Sarasota Bay, watershed science, and the carbon cycle. Over two days of hands-on activities and presentations, students explored their connection to the bay and experienced how different elements move through our environment. STEAMH camp, coordinated by the Multicultural Health Institute, is a 6-week summer experience aimed to expose middle and high school students to topics around the environment, financial literacy, holistic health, nutrition, and more. The curriculum includes guest speakers, hands-on activities, presentations, and field trips. Thank you to the Multicultural Health Institute for inviting us to participate and to the Deliverance Miracle Revival Center for hosting the camp!



Unidos Now Explores Sarasota Bay

In May, a group of 13 members from Unidos Now ventured out to explore Sarasota Bay as part of SBEP's youth kayaking program in partnership with Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium. The program aims to increase access to the bay for those who may not be able to get out on the water regularly. The tours, led by Brad Tanner, Mote's Marine Science Educator, launch from Mote's campus to explore the bay, look for local critters, and discuss the importance of estuaries. Afterwards, participants get to explore the aquarium.

SBEP In-House Updates: Best Wishes to Michael Dexter!



We would like to thank Michael Dexter, SBEP's outgoing Finance and Grants Manager, for the hard work and knowledge he has brought to the program. We will greatly miss his expertise and support, but we wish him all the best in the next phase of his career.

Bite-Size Bay News



Sharks take refuge from red tide in Sarasota Bay in Longboat canals

"Sharks from Sarasota Bay are crowding the waters of some Longboat Key neighborhoods in an attempt to get a breather from red tide."

Read more about sharks seeking refuge from red tide >



"Tesla of the seas": All-electric boatmaker X Shore docks in Sarasota

"X Shore, a still-small Swedish boat company, has established a logistics base in Sarasota and is looking to expand manufacturing of its all-electric boat into parts of the U.S."

Read more about the electric boat manufacturer >



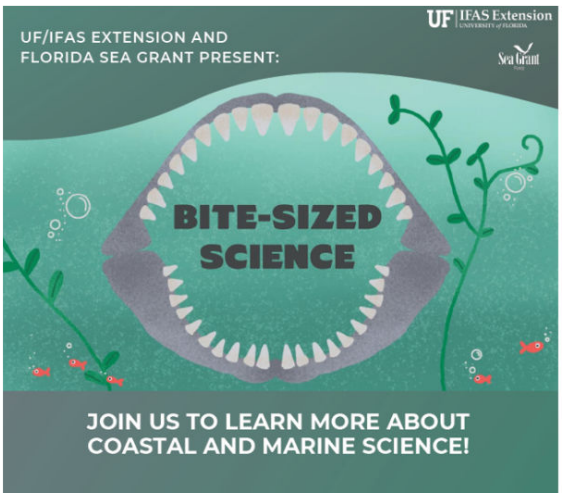
Gulf Coast invests $100,000 more into Venice Urban Forest

"What used to be an empty stretch of land tucked between the Venetian Waterway Park and the Seaboard industrial area is becoming a leafy, green oasis for both human and animal visitors."

Read more about the Venice Urban Forest >

Events and Volunteer Opportunities

Florida Sea Grant: Bite Sized Science
Bocados de Ciencias
4PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays through August 5, 2021





Register for Bite Sized Science / Registrarse para Bocados de Ciencias >

Keep Manatee County Beautiful Cleanups

Aug 7th, Sept 4th, Oct 2nd, Nov 6th, and Dec 4th from 9AM - 11AM

Various Locations



Register for a 1st Saturday Cleanup >



Register for all talks at **https://tinyurl.com/SustainFL**

Dates

April 29, 2021	Sustainable Landscaping Practices
May 20, 2021	Ecology in the Home Garden
June 17, 2021	Cover crops sustain summer soils
July 15, 2021	Sustainable food and You
August 19, 2021	A Big fish story: The History of Goliath Grouper Recovery in FL
September 16, 2021	Making the Best Better: Volunteers Sustain 4-H!
October 21, 2021	Recycling and composting
November 18, 2021	Sustainable Fishing

For more information contact

Manatee County Extension Service, 941-722-4524, manatee@ifas.ufl.edu
Sarasota County Extension Service, 941-861-9886, sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu

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Register for the Sustainability Series Lunch & Learn >

Suncoast Reef Rovers Artificial Reef Cleanup

August 18th at 8AM

South Brohard Beach Parking Lot (1753-1999 Harbor Dr. South, Venice)

Divers, kayakers, and topside volunteers needed. For more information, contact: Ken Lackmann (ken.lackmann@usda.gov)



Learn more about Suncoast Reef Rovers >

Adopt A WaterGoat



Sarasota County has installed several WaterGoats as a county-wide floatable pollution prevention program that initiates community cleanup projects for litter removal to help maintain Sarasota County local waterways free of floating trash.

Learn more and get involved in the WaterGoat Program >

Opportunities to Share Your Feedback

- Bay Park Conservancy 2021 Park Visitor Survey
- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Transportation Master Plan User Survey available in English and Spanish to understand the walking and biking needs and interests of residents.

Upcoming University of Florida/IFAS Extension Webinars

Sarasota County

Manatee County

Jobs & Funding Opportunities

- Sarasota County Water Quality Supervisor - open until filled
- University of South Florida Water Institute Web Developer
- Mote Marine Laboratory – multiple positions

Water Reading from Around the Web

Coastal flooding projections have been ignoring the wobbly moon problem



“New research finds that variations in the moon’s orbit will lead to a burst of sunny-day flooding in the mid-2030s."

Read more on Grist >

Seagrass can help reduce ocean acidification at local scales



"Underwater seagrass meadows absorb carbon dioxide, reducing acidification in the area, recent research shows."

Read more on Climate Connections >

[When a single tree makes a difference]



"A single tree along a city street or in a backyard can provide measurable cooling benefits, according to a new study."

Read more on Science Daily >

Request a Speaker from SBEP

SBEP staff members regularly speak to homeowner, neighborhood, and community groups and upper-level classrooms about Sarasota Bay ecology and restoration. Weekday and evening presentations are now being scheduled through summer 2021. Click the button below to request a speaker for your group.

SARASOTA BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM
Restoring Our Bays

Visit the SBEP website to schedule a speaker >

Follow us on Facebook Follow us on Instagram Visit Our Website

Bay Reflections is the quarterly e-newsletter from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset - Sarasota Bay. We offer special thanks to our partners: Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Our office is located in the Federal Building in downtown Sarasota:

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