

SARASOTA BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM
Restoring Our Bays

SUMMER 2022

Bay Reflections

NEWS FROM THE SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

Janicki Environmental selected to guide Reasonable Assurance Plan for Sarasota Bay



SBEP recently selected Janicki Environmental to guide the multi-year process of creating a Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP or RA Plan) for Sarasota Bay. The plan aims to address the fact that several creeks and bay segments have been deemed “impaired” by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for certain water quality parameters, like dissolved oxygen, nitrogen, or chlorophyll-a. The Reasonable Assurance Plan process is one of two ways to address out-of-range levels and allows for a more collaborative, locally-led approach to improving water quality.

SBEP’s primary role is to aid the local governments in our watershed in meeting their regulatory requirements, while also implementing the types of projects that are most likely able to deliver the nitrogen load reductions that SBEP believes are required to return Sarasota Bay back to the healthier conditions that existed less than a decade ago. The final Sarasota Bay RAP will result in pollutant reduction goals for each bay segment, while taking into account the following concerns; 1) future population growth, 2) 30 years of potential sea level rise, 3) other issues relevant to the health of the bay, and 4) review potentially problematic impairment determinations. This process is expected to take three years to complete.

Habitat Restoration Updates: GT Bray Park and F.I.S.H. Preserve

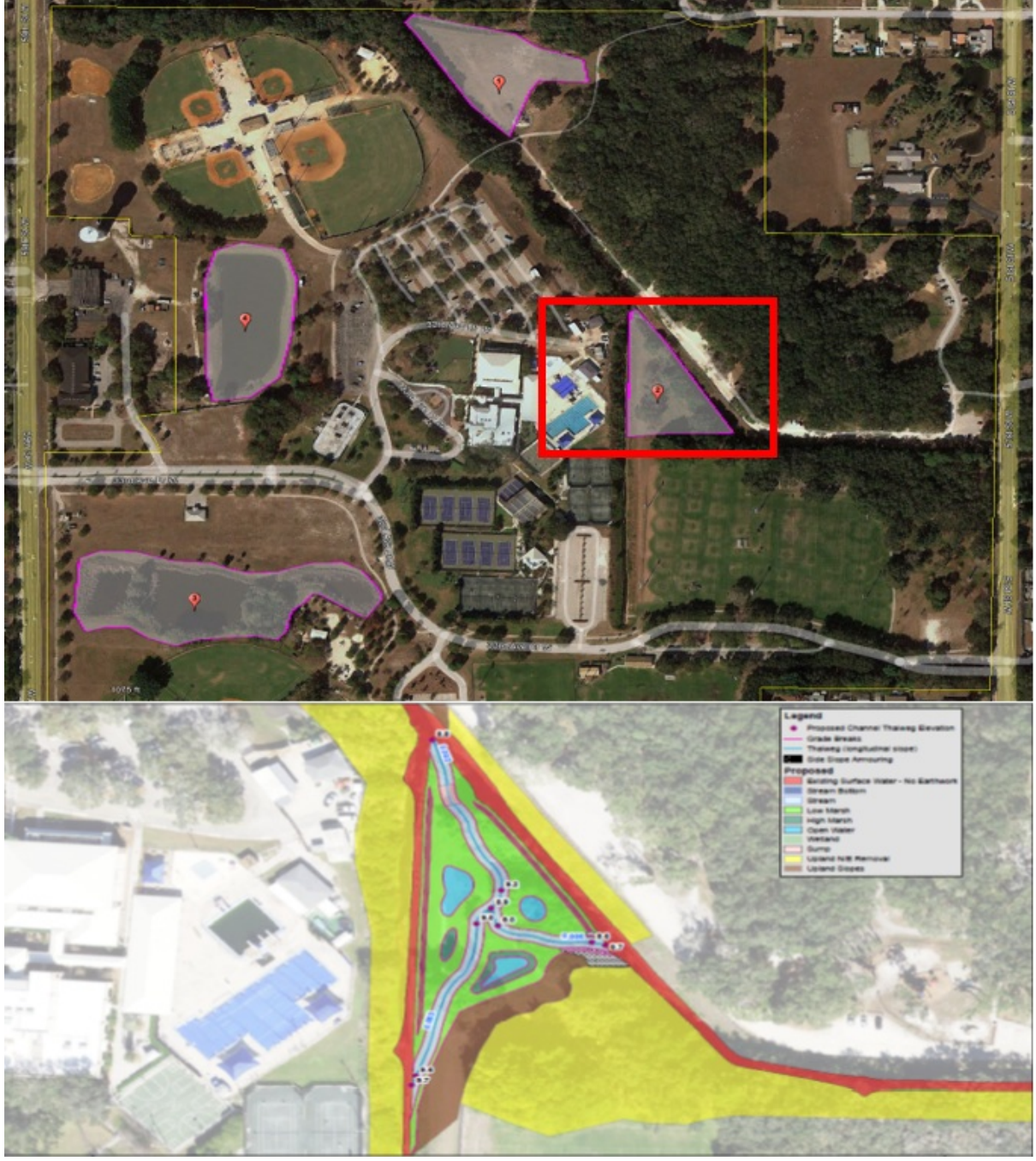


Construction plans are completed and environmental permits have been submitted for two exciting restoration projects in Manatee County. If all goes well with the permitting process, construction on both projects should begin this fall. The work at the FISH Preserve will complete the long-awaited restoration of this 99-acre coastal wetlands in Cortez, which began in 2006. Once completed, plans for trails, bridges and educational signage to be installed will make this a wonderful nature adventure.



Restoration plans for F.I.S.H. Preserve Phase 4

Restoration at G.T. Bray Park will include habitat improvements along a stormwater ditch that runs alongside the park and restoring ecological value to a stormwater pond on site. Both projects aim to inform park visitors on the benefits of stormwater management to the health of Sarasota Bay.



Restoration plans for G.T. Bray Park

Volunteers Needed: Leffis Key Preserve Planting

Saturday, August 6 from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM



Join SBEP and Manatee County for a volunteer planting day at Leffis Key Preserve. Tools, gloves, and plants will be provided. Participants should wear long clothing and closed-toe shoes comfortable for working outdoors, wear sun protection, and bring a water bottle. Free lunch will be provided for all volunteers. Registration is required for this event.

Click here to register for the Leffis Key Preserve Planting

Eyes on Seagrass monitoring underway



During these last two weeks in July, volunteers and SBEP staff have been collecting macroalgae and seagrass data around Sarasota Bay as part of the Eyes on Seagrass Program. In partnership with Florida Sea Grant, Manatee and Sarasota counties, and Mote Marine Laboratory, the program aims to fill in a **gap in macroalgae patterns and trends on the Gulf Coast**. The data collected also contribute to the **Sarasota Bay Ecosystem Health Report Card**, which is updated annually and assesses the water

quality and overall status of the bay. Eyes on Seagrass takes place twice a year in the spring and summer. This July marks a year since the program expanded into Sarasota Bay. It was originally created through the efforts of Florida Sea Grant, UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte County, and the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) and ranged from Charlotte Harbor to Lemon Bay. Expanding this standardized method for monitoring macroalgae and seagrass across estuaries not only helps identify what's happening in each area, but it can also offer a larger picture of trends across the Gulf Coast.

Sarasota Bay Educators' Workshop helps connect stakeholders and identify needs



This past March, SBEP, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Mote Marine Laboratory, and Sarasota and Manatee County Schools, hosted a Sarasota Bay Educators' Workshop. Sixty classroom and informal educators came together to inventory existing programs; identify gaps in topics, audiences, and experiences; and create new pathways that bridge offerings among local organizations. Workshop feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and attendees identified communication gaps as the priority issue for engaging more K-12 classrooms in Bay-related educational opportunities. SBEP hopes to work with steering committee partners to determine the best methods to improve communication moving forward.

Staff Updates: Welcome Megan Barry!

This past June, SBEP welcomed Megan Barry as the new Public Outreach Manager. Megan is a native Floridian with a personal

connection to Florida's environments, wildlife, and communities. She graduated from Florida State University with a degree in Environmental Science and is pursuing a master's degree in Sustainable Policy from the University of South Florida. Before Megan joined SBEP, she worked as an exhibit designer for a municipally owned marine conservation center and as an outreach specialist for Sarasota County's Neighborhood Services Department.



As the Public Outreach Manager, Megan oversees SBEP's Bay Partners Grants program, interfaces with the SBEP Citizens' Advisory Committee, organizes volunteer events, and shares the state of the bay through communication platforms. She is motivated to connect people to Sarasota Bay through inclusive programs, creative storytelling, and a robust network of partnerships. We are so thrilled and lucky to have her with us! Welcome, Megan!

Free Vertical Oyster Gardens available to residents and businesses

SBEP, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources, and Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START) have partnered to offer FREE Vertical Oyster Gardens to residents and businesses with docks in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

Watch the video below to learn more about the program and about a recent installation at Durante Park on Longboat Key.



Interested in installing a vertical oyster garden on your dock?

Click here to learn more about Vertical Oyster Gardens

Congrats 2022 Bay Partners Grant Recipients!

SBEP would like to congratulate all of the 2022 Bay Partners Grant Awardees! The**Bay Partners Grant Program** offers annual awards of up to $10,000 for projects in Sarasota and Manatee counties that promote habitat and water quality restoration, environmental education, community involvement, and stewardship. This year, the grants committee awarded a total of just under $100,000, a significant increase from previous years, to 16 organizations:

- Banyan Bay Club - Multi-Phase Residential Case Study to Reduce Impact on Sarasota Bay in a Flood-Prone Area by Removing Invasive Plants, and Restoring it with Native Plant Species
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County - Increase the Cool - Shade Tree Installation
- City of Holmes Beach - 34th and 35th St. Pocket Parks
- Crooked Creek Condominium Association - Crooked Creek Shoreline Enhancement
- Every Child, Inc. Sarasota - Limelight Community Garden
- Indian Beach - Sapphire Shores Neighborhood Association - Expansion of Indian Beach - Sapphire Shores Greenway
- Keep Manatee Beautiful Manatee - Palma Sola Scenic Highway Murals
- Longboat Key Estates - Bayfront Park Canal Bank Improvements
- Manatee Fish and Game Association - Bowlees Creek Island Bird Sanctuary Island Vegetation Enhancement and Trash Removal
- New College of Florida - Caples Campus Vegetated Buffer Zone
- New College of Florida - PUSH/SUCCESS 2022 Summer Camp
- Sarasota County Schools - Aquaculture/Marine Science 2 Program at Sarasota High

School
- Shorewalk Palms Condominium Association - SP3 (Shorewalk Palms Pond Project)
- Suncoast Aqua Ventures - Marine debris removal from Bowlees Creek
- Sunshine Community Compost - Soil Care is Water Care - A Community Composting Education and Action Program
- Vizcaya of Bradenton Condominium Association - Shoreline Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Project

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Bay Partners Grant Project Highlight: The Power of Partnerships

Suncoast Reef Rovers, Sarasota Bay Watch, & Suncoast Aqua Ventures



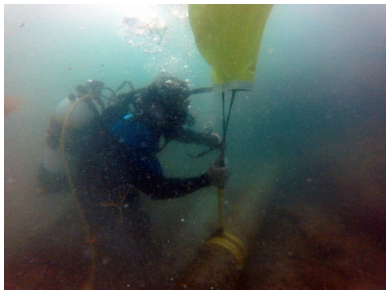
Suncoast Reef Rovers, Sarasota Bay Watch, and Suncoast Aqua Ventures are the experts when it comes to underwater and coastal cleanups. From Bowlees Creek Island to the Venice Jetties, these organizations have been working to keep our waterways clean, and they successfully demonstrate the power of leveraging partnerships for greater impact. All three organizations have received a Bay Partners Grant in the last two years to help support their cleanup efforts, which are no small feat. It is not uncommon for their dedicated and hard-working volunteers to remove over 1,000lbs of debris in a single event. Over the last two years, these groups, in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Sarasota County, Venice Police Department, Sarasota County Sheriff, Reef Innovations, Sea Tow, and others have **removed roughly 50,000 lbs of trash and 152 derelict crab traps from Sarasota Bay, its tidal creeks, and several artificial reef sites.**

"I met both Ronda [Sarasota Bay Watch] and Federico [Suncoast Reef Rovers] a few years ago doing cleanups. I truly enjoy working with them and others to do what we do. Friendships have formed among many of us. And my favorite quote….'It feels good to do good!'" - Cheryl Huntsinger, Suncoast Aqua Ventures

"I have to say that it has been very rewarding. Teaming up with other groups has made us more efficient and productive." - Federico Vazquez, Suncoast Reef Rovers

The Sarasota Bay Partners Grants Program makes awards to community organizations for projects that will benefit Sarasota Bay. **Read about other Bay Partners projects on the SBEP website**.







Jobs & Funding Opportunities

- **Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast: Land Steward**
- **Sarasota County: Environmental Science - Water Quality Manager II, Stormwater/Watershed**
- **Sarasota County: Water Quality Specialist - Environmental Specialist III**
- Sarasota Audubon Society: Nature Center Manager - contact info@sarasotaaudubon.org
- **Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium: multiple positions**
- **Ringling College of Art + Design: Adjunct Faculty for Fall 2022 Biodiversity course**
- **State College of Florida. Manatee-Sarasota: Adjunct Instructor, Oceanography/Marine Science**
- **Beautiful Ponds: Technician** - contact Nathan@beautifulponds.com
- **Tampa Bay Estuary Program: Administrative Specialist**
- **Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership: Conservation Associate Intern**
- **Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council: Accounting Manager**
- **Saildrone: Lead Hydrographer - St. Petersburg**
- **USF: Environmental & Conservation Greenspace Director - Tampa**
- **Florida Aquarium: multiple positions - Tampa**
- **Ocean Conservancy: Florida Conservation Program Specialist - St. Petersburg**
- **TBEP Mini grants** – due Sept 16

Community & Partner Events

Check out upcoming green events from over 100 local organizations on the NEW **Green Living Toolkit Community Events Calendar!**

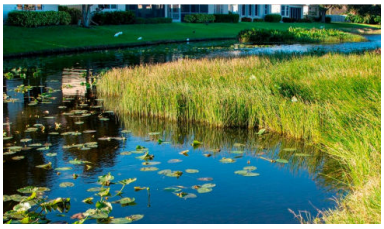


Bite Sized Bay News



Florida leads the way in coastal restoration with seagrass and clams

"$2.5 million has been appropriated to support sustainability and resilience. The funding will kickstart a five-year research and restoration initiative that will provide for large-scale plantings of clams and seagrass, which will support



Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START) Expands Healthy Ponds Collaborative into Manatee County

"Building on a successful program that helped more than two dozen Sarasota County communities bolster (and beautify) their stormwater retention ponds, Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START) has secured a



Do a little eavesdropping, learn about dolphins' language

"Researchers have been doing a little eavesdropping on dolphins, and they're starting to have a better idea of how they communicate with each other. Over the years, researchers at the Sarasota Dolphin Research Program have collected

local businesses and create a natural 'macro-laboratory.'"

Read more on WFTV ABC 9

$100,000 grant from Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation to expand a regional “Healthy Pond Collaborative” (HPC) initiative into Manatee County."

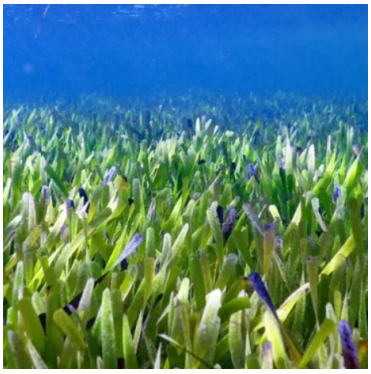
Read more in SRQ Magazine

hundreds of recordings by installing hydrophones that are like microphones that work in the water."

Read more on WTSP

Water Reading From Around the Web

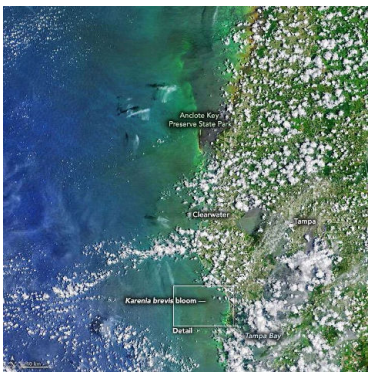
Scientists discover self-cloning sea grass that's 'biggest plant on Earth' off Australian coast



"A new study revealed that self-cloning sea grass located off the western Australian coast is actually one individual plant, making it the largest ever and the size of the entire city of Cincinnati."

Read more on USA Today

New study links red tides and dead zones off west coast of Florida



"A new study found that when red tides began in early summer and continued into the fall, low oxygen areas—or dead zones— were more likely to also occur."

Read more on phys.org

Starting July 1, Sea-Level Rise Studies Required for Florida Gov’t Coastal Structures



"Starting Friday, July 1, state and local governments will have to conduct a sea-level impact study if they build anything near Florida’s coastline, the result of a state law passed in 2020."

Read more on Insurance Journal

Book 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 Fall 2022.

Click here to request a speaker from SBEP

Follow us

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