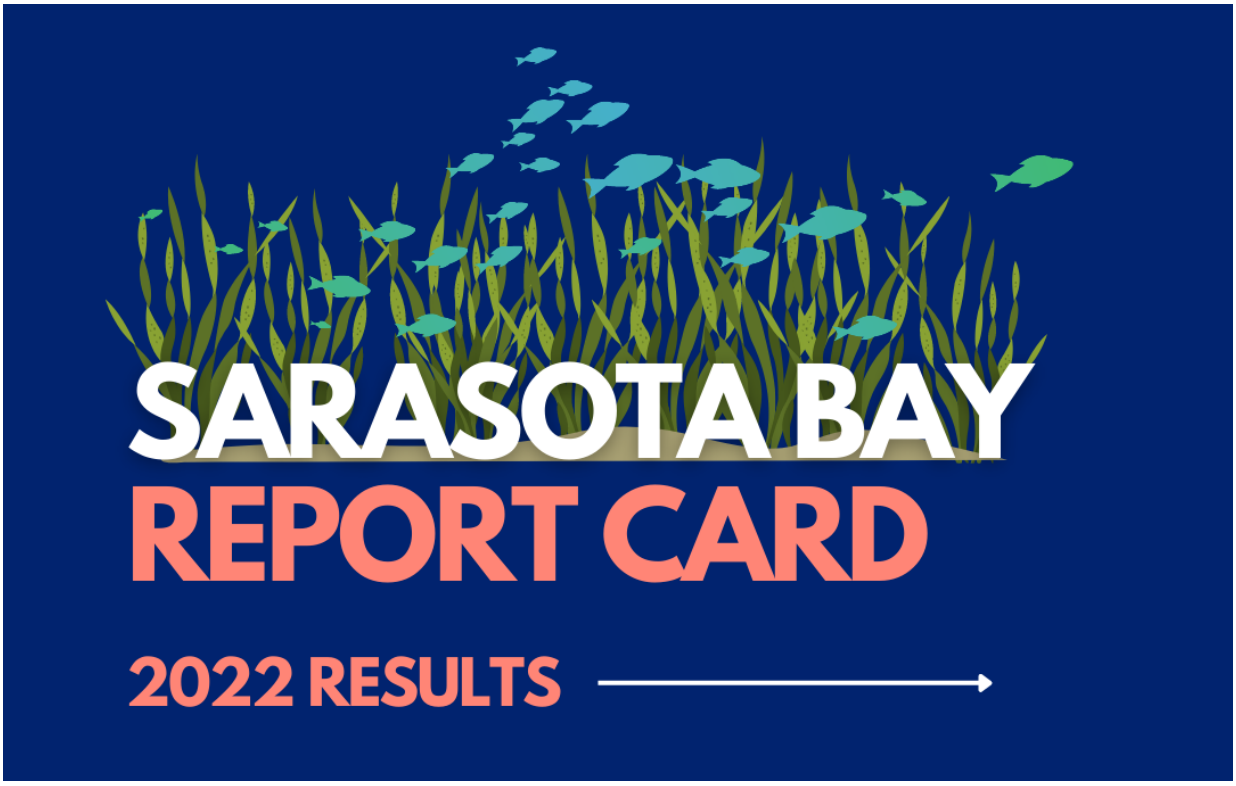

SARASOTA BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM
Bay Reflections
NEWS FROM THE SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM


SARASOTA BAY
REPORT CARD
2022 RESULTS



The 2022 ecosystem health report card shows a decrease in bay health in Big Sarasota Bay, Roberts Bay, Little Sarasota Bay, and Blackburn Bay, while Palma Sola Bay remains in good shape.

Year	Palma Sola	Upper Bay	Roberts	Little Sarasota	Blackburn
2006	3.67	3.50	3.50	3.75	3.75
2007	3.00	3.25	4.00	3.75	3.75
2008	3.67	3.00	3.00	3.25	3.25
2009	3.67	3.25	3.25	3.50	3.00
2010	3.67	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.75
2011	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.50
2012	3.00	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00
2013	3.67	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.00
2014	4.00	3.50	2.50	2.25	2.25
2015	3.67	2.75	2.00	2.00	2.00
2016	3.67	2.75	1.75	1.75	2.25
2017	3.67	2.75	2.00	2.00	2.00
2018	4.00	2.25	2.00	1.25	1.75
2019	4.00	2.75	3.25	1.50	1.50
2020	4.00	3.00	3.00	2.25	2.00
2021	3.75	3.75	3.75	2.75	3.00
2022	4.00	3.25	2.75	2.25	2.75

A All signs indicate healthy water quality; continue to monitor as usual

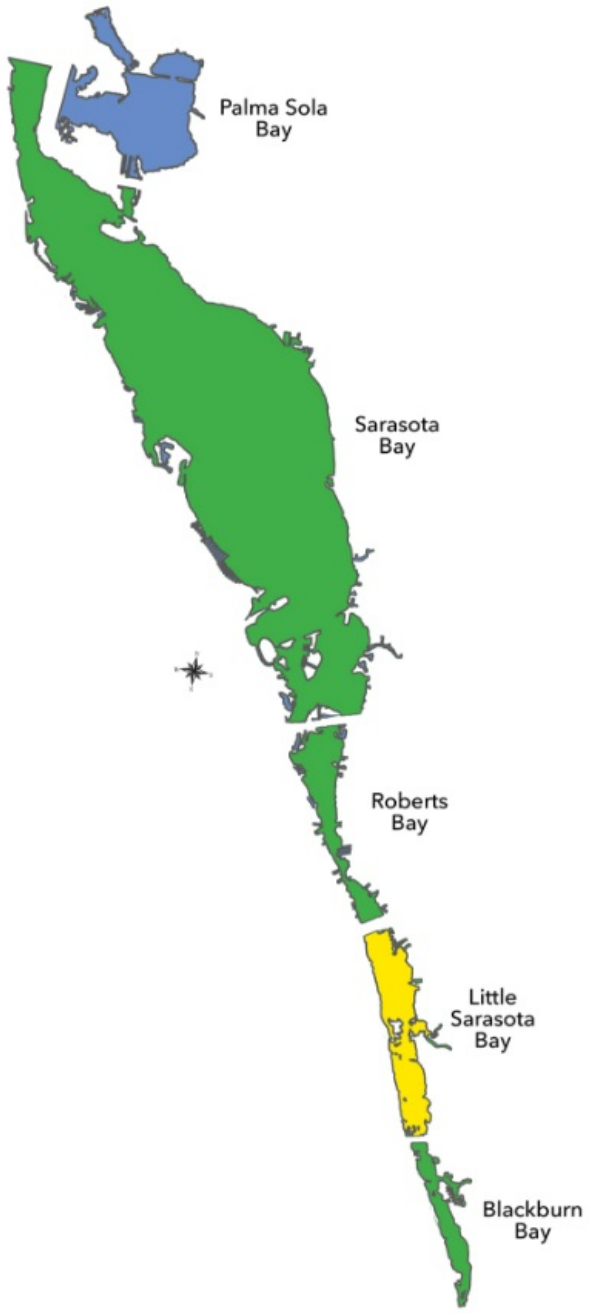
B Most signs indicate healthy water quality; monitor carefully

C One or more signs indicate concern; investigate stressors, check for compliance with wastewater and stormwater permits, and plan for management actions

D All signs indicate water quality degradation; take management actions

Palma Sola Bay – showed a slight increase in the report card score compared to 2021. Total nitrogen and chlorophyll-a levels were similar to what they were during the reference period from 2006 – 2012 when water quality and seagrass coverage was generally good across all bay segments. Seagrass levels declined by 1.3% from 2020, and macroalgae coverage was lower than 25%.

Big Sarasota Bay/Upper Bay – the decrease in report card score is likely due to impacts from the Piney Point discharges, which helped fuel a macroalgae bloom in the upper part of the bay. High levels of macroalgae were observed in 2022. In addition, the majority of the seagrass losses from 2020-2022 happened in this



portion of the bay.

Lower Bay systems (Roberts, Little Sarasota, and Blackburn bays) - each of the three lower bay segments, which were showing slight recovery in 2021, showed declines in 2022, especially in Little Sarasota Bay. Hurricane Ian had a much bigger effect on water quality in the lower bay than the upper bay. Little Sarasota Bay showed evidence of widespread salinity stratification (layer of fresher water on top of a layer of saltier water). This doesn't allow for mixing, so bottom waters can become hypoxic (low oxygen), which happened after Hurricane Ian came through.

Click here to read more about the Ecosystem Health Report Card

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Midnight Pass: what does the science say?



There has been much discussion recently around the proposal of opening Midnight Pass. So, what would that mean from a water quality and habitat standpoint? The short answer is it's complicated. SBEP is not in favor of one solution over another. However, we are here to help share what we know so that all alternatives to restore hydrology can be explored and a decision can be made using the best available science.

Click here to read more on Midnight Pass

Eyes on Seagrass surveying underway with festival in the fall



This past weekend kicked off the Eyes on Seagrass sampling effort. Twice a year in April and July, citizen scientists head out during a two-week window to sample 41 locations in Sarasota Bay and collect data on seagrass and macroalgae (i.e. seaweed). The results help fill a data gap in macroalgae monitoring and contribute to the **Sarasota Bay ecosystem health report card**. This July will mark two years 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.

As a way to say thank you to volunteers and celebrate bay habitats, SBEP in partnership with Sarasota County will be hosting a free festival this fall with food, music, and hand-on activities. All are welcome. Stay tuned for more details!

Click here to learn more about seagrass and algae monitoring

Construction begins on final phase of FISH Preserve restoration

Early in April, the final restoration efforts began for the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage (FISH) Preserve. Initial restoration for this 99-acre coastal wetland in Cortez started in 2006 and could not have gotten to the home stretch without the help of several partners. The final phase includes clearing exotic and invasive vegetation, creating tidal wetland areas that will help filter stormwater from the surrounding landscape as well as

from the community immediately to the east of the preserve, which currently does not have any stormwater treatment. The team plans to complete this final phase by the end of June 2023. Once completed, plans for trails, bridges and educational signage to be installed will make this a wonderful oasis on Sarasota Bay!





Clearing exotic and invasive vegetation at FISH Preserve, April 2023

We're Hiring!



Are you a college student or recent graduate who is passionate about environmental science, policy, or community engagement? If so, apply to our 2023 summer internship! This year's intern will focus on coastal stewardship by working with local stakeholders, citizen science programs, and environmental policy to help us further our mission.

Click here to learn more and apply

Join SBEP's Citizens Advisory Committee

Community input is integral to our mission. The SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is a group of local individuals who gather six times per year to provide SBEP with input and to help us share information with the public. Our CAC members have a wide array of professional and personal attributes, but they are all tied by their dedication to the health of Sarasota Bay. Interested in joining? Click the button below to learn more or email megan@sarasotabay.org for a prospective member application.

Click here to learn more about the Citizens Advisory Committee

Celebrate Earth Month With Us!

April is an exciting time to get involved in stewardship opportunities and learn more about our natural environment. Come join SBEP at several upcoming events to celebrate and protect all the benefits of our local waterways, landscapes, and species.

Earth Day at the Bay
April 22

Learn More



Nature Talks and Walks for Earth Day
April 22

Learn More



Environmental Justice Event April 24 & 25

Learn More



Suncoast Remake Learning Days at FISH Preserve
April 29

Learn More



Lights, Camera, Action!

SBEP in the News

Communication is vital to the protection and restoration of the bay. Check out the latest clips and articles featuring SBEP efforts.



Sarasota County leaders learn about science of Midnight Pass as they pursue reopening it
"Dave Tomasko, the executive director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, spoke to the County Commission as it considers how to create a new connection between the gulf and the bay."



US congressman meets Manatee County leaders for round table talks on red tide
"The issue has now gotten the attention of local elected leaders in Washington. U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (R – Congressman 16th District, Longboat Key) hosted a roundtable discussion about the recent high levels of red tide in Southwest Florida."

Click here for SBEP in the News

Jobs & Funding Opportunities

- **Save Our Seabirds: Office and Volunteer Coordinator - Sarasota**
- **Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium: multiple positions**
- **USF: Environmental & Conservation Greenspace Director - Tampa**
- **Florida Aquarium: multiple positions - Tampa**
- **Geosyntec Consultants: Early-Career Water Resources Engineer or Scientist - Tampa**

Bite Sized Bay News



A New Local Mapping Project Aims to Protect Mangroves

"The project will track mangrove growth and conditions along northern Sarasota Bay, Palma Sola Bay, southern Tampa Bay, Terra Ceia Bay and the Manatee River.'"

Read more



Army Corps of Engineers seeking input on Intracoastal Waterway dredging

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District is planning to dredge parts of the 160-mile Intracoastal Waterway, including priority areas in Charlotte, Manatee and Sarasota counties."

Read more



Drone footage shows baby bottlenose dolphin cut free from fishing lines

"A baby bottlenose dolphin was rescued by a team of 51 members gathered by the Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Program in Sarasota Bay on February 21. The 2-year-old female calf faces a long and uncertain road to recovery."

Watch the Video

Community & Partner Events

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



Book a Speaker from SBEP

SBEP staff members regularly speak to homeowners, neighborhood, and community groups and upper-level classrooms about Sarasota Bay ecology and restoration.

Click here to request a speaker from

SBEP

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