



2025 - 2030 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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Executive Summary

With nearly one million residents in our region, it is essential that SBEP staff implement strategic and effective communication initiatives that keep pace with the rapidly evolving landscape of modern media and technology. For example, the 2022 Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) was published as an interactive ArcGIS Story Map, garnering nearly 2,000 views since its launch. This engagement far exceeded the prior CCMP distribution through hard copy literature. While digital platforms provide greater accessibility and reach, printed copies were still made available to accommodate those who prefer traditional methods of learning. Maintaining a balance between these approaches is key to effectively educating and engaging a diverse audience, including those from the private sector, public sector, youth, residents, tourists, as well as passive and active bay users.

SBEP has also made significant strides in refining its brand and broadening its communications focus. While traditionally seen as a trusted source of credible scientific information, the program has increasingly become a platform for sharing timely updates, addressing local issues, and celebrating positive news related to the bay. For example, SBEP acted dynamically to respond to public interest in Midnight Pass, a region of high interest to our stakeholders. The program was active in this issue by providing an unbiased, scientific analysis of the pass, attending a panel discussion on the ecological and management implications of the area, developing social media updates to respond to stewardship concerns, joining reporters on site visits, and informing the general public on the issue through community meetings. This is an example of how we can uniquely position ourselves amongst our stakeholders and continue to be a voice for the bay.

The impact of these efforts is reflected in the results of the 2025 Communications Plan survey, as well as a notable rise in media coverage and community engagement. In 2024 alone, SBEP reached more than 3,000 individuals through in-person outreach, demonstrating the growing success and relevance of our communications strategy. This Communications Plan supports and expands upon the goals of the 2022 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) and updates the [2019 – 2024 Communications Plan](#). It will help guide SBEP's public engagement, communication, and education initiatives through five guiding principles including science-based solutions, measurable results, innovative partnerships, strategic positioning, and targeted and tailored reach. This plan integrates internal evaluation of current programs as well as feedback from SBEP staff, partners, Management Conference, volunteers, grantees, and program participants via a 2025 Stakeholder Survey and informal interviews (Appendix B).

Background

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is one of 28 National Estuary Programs in the United States and is dedicated to restoring our area’s greatest and most important natural asset – the Sarasota Bay Estuary. The estuary’s watershed extends from the Anna Maria Sound to the Venice Inlet and includes significant portions of Sarasota and Manatee counties, Anna Maria Island, Longboat Key, Lido Key, Siesta Key, and Casey Key.

Figure 1 – Sarasota Bay Watershed



Sarasota Bay Watershed Statistics

Watershed Area:

150 sq. miles

2024 Population Estimates:

Sarasota: 476,604 (+14% since 2019)

Manatee: 458,352 (+19% since 2019)

Sarasota Bay’s Economic Impact:

3.6 billion in property value uplift

1 in every 17 jobs relies on a healthy bay

\$487 million in recreational spending

Source: [The Sarasota Bay Economic Valuation Project: Phase II.](#) 2014. (P.

Hindsley, O. Morgan.)

Actions and Objectives Crosswalk

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (**SMART**) Criteria will be used when evaluating the success of each Action Item. Key criteria and example outcomes are listed for each.



Specific

Defined deliverables or target audiences



Measurable

Data based outcomes



Achievable

Strategic processes and planning



Relevant

Aligned with programmatic goals






Time-bound

Defined and feasible timeline

Objective A. Align outreach strategies with SBEP priority topics




2022 CCMP Goal Alignment: **Activity CE-1.2:** Educate recreational users about best practices to avoid impacts to bay waters, wildlife, and habitats, including pollution prevention, safe boating, ethical angling, and sustainable tourism.

2025 – 2030 Action Item	Relationship to 2019 – 2024 Communications Plan Action Item(s)	Supporting Programs & Initiatives	Key Success Criteria
A.1 Create an annual outreach strategy that reflects priorities established in the CCMP, annual Workplan, and Long-Range Communications Plan. Identify priority messages, target audiences, budget, and delivery mechanisms. Identify benchmarks for evaluating programs and activities.	<p>Revised: A.1 Create an annual communications plan that reflects priorities established in the CCMP, annual Workplan, and Long-Range Communications Plan.</p> <p>Retired: C.1 Create an annual digital engagement plan that encompasses email campaigns, social media, the Bay Reflections e-newsletter, and other digital communication tools.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u> Captured in 2025 Action A.1</p> <p>Retired: F.1 Assess both reach and effectiveness of all major SBEP engagement and education programs.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u> Captured in 2025 Action A.1</p>	CCMP, Annual Workplans; Five-year Communications Plan; SBEP boards	 <p><u>Examples include:</u> Public facing annual report, outreach and communications strategy documents, and assessments</p>
A.2 Develop and support educational resources and workshops to reflect SBEP priority topics.	<p>Completed: A.2 Allocate a portion of Bay Partners Grants each year to SBEP research and restoration priorities</p> <p><u>Justification:</u> The Fiscal Year 2026 budget includes \$65,000 for research grants</p> <p>Revised: A.3 Update teacher training workshops and materials to focus on SBEP priority issues</p>	Annual teacher workshops; Bay Reflections newsletter; partnerships & collaborations; Bay partners grants; SBEP boards	 <p><u>Examples include:</u> number of resources, teacher trainings/ workshops and educational events; Pre-post knowledge gain assessments; number of teachers completing workshops; number of teachers using one or more lesson plans in the classroom; number of children reached through teachers annually.</p>

<p>A.3 Direct volunteer programs and events to support and reflect SBEP priority topics.</p>	<p>Revised: A.4 Direct volunteer programs to activities that support and provide opportunities for communicating key research and restoration priorities, such as creation of Living Shorelines and tidal creek cleanups</p>	<p>Bay Guardians; Eyes on Seagrass; festivals; restoration events and workshops; National Estuaries Week; youth field trips; veterans kayaking; SBEP boards</p>	 <p>Examples include: Number of events related to priority topics; change in participant knowledge about priority topics; environmental metrics related to priorities (i.e., lbs. of trash removed, number of plants installed, number or size of reefs, vertical oyster gardens</p>
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Objective B. Expand opportunities for citizen participation in bay science and stewardship.

2022 CCMP Goal Alignment: **Activity CE-2.2:** Support volunteer restoration and citizen science activities that contribute to assessment, monitoring, and restoration of bay and gulf waters, shorelines, wetlands, and other habitats. **Activity CE-2.3:** Assist and empower citizens to adopt sustainable bay-friendly lifestyles and to lead community initiatives that reduce pollution, conserve water and energy, and promote community health.

2025 – 2030 Action Item	Relationship to 2019 – 2024 Communications Plan Action Item(s)	Supporting Programs & Initiatives	Key Success Criteria
<p>B1 Sponsor a minimum of fifteen volunteer, recreational, and educational events a year.</p>	<p>Revised: B.1 Sponsor a minimum of six Bay Guardians workdays a year. Expand number of workdays as budget or sponsorships allow. <u>Justification:</u> Outreach programs have expanded and evolved beyond Bay Guardians. Meaningful opportunities to engage now also include special events, art programs, and recreational experiences. The new 2025 – 2030 Action Item was edited to better align with the 2022 CCMP.</p>	<p>Bay Guardians; Eyes on Seagrass; National Estuaries Week; youth field trips; veterans kayaking; CAC</p>	 <p>Examples include: number of participants and volunteer events; value of volunteer labor; environmental metrics (i.e., lbs. of trash removed, number of plants installed, number or size of oyster reefs, vertical oyster gardens installed)</p>
<p>B.2 Support stewardship initiatives on private and publicly owned waterfront properties.</p>	<p>Retired: B.2 Create an ongoing “Adopt A Park” program for volunteers who want to go “beyond Bay Guardians.” <u>Justification:</u> Pivoted and expanded upon in 2025 Action B.2</p>	<p>Vertical Oyster Gardens; Raincheck; Longboat Key seawall; Healthy Ponds Collaborative; Living shorelines, Low Impact Development (LID), Florida Friendly Landscaping (FFL); Bay partners grants; Bay Friendly Living; Green Living Toolkit; CAC</p>	 <p>Examples include: Number of participants or referrals; number of completed homeowner projects/actions; environmental metrics (i.e., area or linear feet of living shorelines, number of native plants installed)</p>
<p>B.3 Encourage and expand public involvement in SBEP citizen-science programs.</p>	<p>Revised: B.3 Empower and train citizen-scientists to contribute observations and data to research and monitoring programs that support CCMP implementation.</p>	<p>Eyes on Seagrass; King Tides photo contests; Soil carbon storage/Tea Bags; Restoration site review; CAC</p>	 <p>Examples include: Number of participants and events/initiatives, products created from citizen data</p>

Objective C. Reach beyond traditional partnerships to engage and retain stakeholders

2022 CCMP Goal Alignment: **Activity CE- 3.1:** Support capacity of non-profit, community, and business partners to educate and engage the public in outreach and stewardship that furthers CCMP implementation through professional development opportunities, workshops, and grants. **Activity CE-3.2:** Connect the value of natural resource protection with preservation of cultural heritage and traditional use of Sarasota Bay through partnerships with cultural heritage organizations.

2025 – 2030 Action Item	Relationship to 2019 – 2024 Communications Plan Action Item(s)	Supporting Programs & Initiatives	Key Success Criteria
<p>C.1 Enlist business owners and interest groups with a vested interest in a healthy bay as partners in relevant education campaigns or collaborative partnerships.</p>	<p>Retained: D.1 Enlist business owners and interest groups with a vested interest in a healthy bay as partners in relevant education campaigns or collaborative partnerships (i.e., Realtors or Homebuilders for Living Shorelines; Physicians for health-related impacts of Harmful Algal Blooms).</p>	<p>Sales contribution partnership w/ Casa Costera; red tide study with Roskamp Institute; public art & cultural heritage initiatives; seagrass safe boating & braided fishing line w/ marinas and rental businesses; kayaking with veterans & Project 180; Bay Partners Grants; CAC</p>	 <p><u>Examples include:</u> Donations from sales; feedback from partners; metrics specific to campaigns (i.e., increased knowledge about braided fishing line or seagrass scarring)</p>
<p>C.2 Retain existing partners and stakeholders through relationship building, consultation, funding support, cross promotion, and amplification. Reassess SBEP positioning as the organizational, business, and volunteer landscapes continue to evolve.</p>	<p>New action</p>	<p>Bay partners Grants; community sponsorships; Bay Guardians volunteer program; partner event support; volunteer appreciation initiatives</p>	 <p><u>Examples include:</u> Volunteer/partner retention; Number of volunteer/partner appreciation initiatives; direct partner support (financial or personnel); feedback from stakeholders</p>
<p>C.3 Ensure that programs and activities are available to all community members. Connect with communities in ways and places that are relevant and meaningful to them. Reduce barriers to participation (i.e., funding, accessibility, educational programs).</p>	<p>Revised: E.1 Connect with underserved communities in ways and places that are relevant and meaningful to them. Completed: D.2 Leverage the desire and energy of the region’s retired and/or seasonal residents to contribute to the community. <u>Justification:</u> Metrics from surveys and events show this group is highly engaged in various SBEP and partner initiatives</p>	<p>Youth field trips with Mote; Veterans kayaking; STEAMH camp; Environmental Ambassador Program; Bay Stewards Program with New College; Whitaker Bayou ECommunity Day</p>	 <p><u>Examples include:</u> Number of participants, feedback from stakeholders and partners, and steps taken to reduce participation barriers (e.g., funding, language, and disability considerations).</p>

Communications Cornerstones

The Communication Cornerstones, which originated from stakeholder input in the 2019-2024 Communications Plan, are a set of guiding principles woven throughout all the objectives and actions in this plan. Although their applications may vary from year to year, they are a foundation for the possibilities and priorities of the outreach program.

Science-Based Solutions

One of the core principles of effective communication is SBEP's commitment to ensuring that unbiased science is the driver behind any initiatives and efforts affecting the health and management of Sarasota Bay. As an organization at the nexus of research, management, and policy, stakeholders rely on SBEP to provide accurate and understandable information about current and emerging issues.

***Recent application:** SBEP [developed a comprehensive webpage](#) to distill and chronicle the science behind *Midnight Pass*, an area of special interest to many community members.*

Measurable Results

SBEP's public engagement, communication, and education initiatives are an investment in the community's long-term interest and ability to steward Sarasota Bay. Assessing the effectiveness of those initiatives through various quantitative and qualitative metrics allows for validation as well as adaptation as communities and environments continue to change.

***Recent application:** SBEP [developed a public-facing annual report](#) to showcase and track fiscal year data on outreach, restoration, and water quality.*

Innovative Partnerships

Collaboration is the foundation of the SBEP program. From the core of its structure - the interlocal agreement with local, state, regional, and federal agencies - to the non-profits, businesses, research and education institutions, and community organizations it partners with, SBEP has and will continue to play a central role in convening stakeholders around innovative and collaborative solutions.

***Recent application:** Each year, SBEP [teams up with organizations across North Sarasota](#) to host the annual *ECOMmunity Day Cleanup*. This event focuses on removing debris from *Whitaker Bayou*, an urban tributary that flows into Sarasota Bay. Scheduled around *Martin Luther King Jr. Day*, the cleanup taps into the strong spirit of community and volunteerism inspired by the holiday*

Strategic Positioning

SBEP is one of several organizations whose mission focuses on the health of our waterways. This allows the program to not only partner with others to amplify impact but also specialize and explore niche roles within the environmental organizational landscape.

Recent application: *SBEP provides grant funding for bay field trips hosted by Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium. This mechanism allows SBEP to leverage established systems that lead to efficient, consistent, and meaningful student engagement.*

Targeted and Tailored Reach

Different communities understand the environment in different ways. SBEP uses an approach to meet people where they are to acknowledge these differences and develop relationships where priorities overlap. Through various programs and opportunities, SBEP also targets communities that may not have a direct connection to Sarasota Bay or many opportunities to experience the region's natural areas.

Recent application: *SBEP helped to develop and continues to support the Sarasota Bay Veterans Kayaking Program. The program introduces veterans to the therapeutic benefits of kayaking and spending time in nature, fostering a meaningful connection with the natural environment.*

Programs At-a-Glance

Program	Summary	Next Steps
Field Trips & Recreational Experiences	Offers hands-on nature experiences like youth field trips, veterans kayaking, and moonlight paddles to connect people with Sarasota Bay and support physical/mental health.	Continue core programs and expand where possible (e.g., adaptive paddling, behind-the-scenes nature tours). Prioritize accessibility and creative partnerships for new experiences.
Volunteer & Citizen Science	Provides hands-on restoration and data collection opportunities through programs like Bay Guardians and Eyes on Seagrass, increasing community involvement and awareness.	Increase the number and variety of opportunities, partner with groups needing volunteer hours, offer events at varied times, and enhance appreciation efforts.
Community Grants & Sponsorships	Supports local organizations with funding for restoration, education, and community engagement projects that align with SBEP goals.	Continue offering grants/sponsorships, improve peer-to-peer learning among grantees, and simplify the process to increase access for more organizations.

Community Events	Engages the public through festivals, cleanup days, and ribbon cuttings to highlight local ecosystems and restoration work.	Continue hosting and participating in events that raise awareness. After restoration projects, maintain momentum with tours, education, and volunteer opportunities.
Stakeholder & Partner Relations	Builds collaborative relationships through committees, events, and partnerships to expand reach and improve program delivery.	Focus on strengthening long-term partnerships and reaching new audiences through events, visibility, and clear communication tools like the Health Report Card and Director’s Notes.
Teacher Training & Educator Workshops	Delivers professional development for K-12 teachers and informal educators to integrate bay science into the classroom.	Continue workshops and integrate feedback (e.g., AI, data tools, writing). Explore classroom visits and more hands-on, collaborative projects.
Educational Tools & Resources	Offers digital and print materials (e.g., website, newsletters, videos) to educate the public on bay health and conservation.	Continue updating and tailoring content to priority topics and underserved areas. Focus on everyday relevance and actionable information.
Public Relations & Marketing	Promotes SBEP’s work through media, branding, events, and consistent messaging to raise awareness and engagement.	Maintain traditional communications while expanding media reach. Strengthen press relationships, highlight success stories, and explore branding enhancements like a tagline.

Programs & Initiatives Breakdown

SBEP maintains a roster of core and special programs to help us achieve our communications goals. Their origin date, target audience, evaluation mechanisms, and opportunities for enhancement are discussed below.

Field Trips and Recreational Experiences

- **Youth Field Trips** – Experienced Mote educators lead field trips, virtual experiences, and outreach programming, giving students access to coastal marine research and science concepts in Sarasota Bay. Many students participate in bay excursions and visit the main Aquarium galleries and the Marine Mammal Center as well. This program is supported by funding from SBEP.
 - Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
 - Audience: Elementary and middle school students from Sarasota and Manatee County Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the Sarasota Housing Authority

- Cost: Approximately \$10,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium
 - Communications Cornerstone: Strategic Positioning
 - Evaluation: Since the program began in 2021, between 500-700 students have participated each year in the youth field trip program. SBEP often receives testimonials from teachers and youth group leaders: *“For all of our students, this was their very first time visiting an aquarium, and the wonder and awe in their eyes said it all. They were amazed by the marine life, deeply engaged in learning, and inspired by the beauty of the underwater world. It’s an experience they will carry with them for a long time.”* - Ms. Velez, Kindergarten teacher at Rogers Garden-Bullock School in Bradenton
- **Veterans Kayaking** – This program aims to introduce veterans to the therapeutic benefits of kayaking and spending time in nature, fostering a meaningful connection with the natural environment. It seeks to deepen participants' understanding of environmental challenges, the historical resilience of ecosystems, and the importance of environmental stewardship. Additionally, the program is designed to equip veterans with practical stress-relief techniques to support mental health and address the high rates of PTSD and suicide within the veteran community.
- Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
 - Audience: Veterans
 - Cost: Approximately \$5,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Wayne Adventures and the Multicultural Health Institute
 - Communications Cornerstone: Targeted and Tailored Reach
 - Evaluation: Since the program began in 2023, roughly 25 veterans have participated every year in about nine annual trips throughout Sarasota Bay. Several participants have gone more than once. One participant, who was previously isolating themselves, was convinced to attend and has since been attending weekly veterans’ coffee gatherings at the VA Support Center



Veterans kayaking participants with Wayne Adventures and the Multicultural Health Institute

- **Full Moon Paddles** – This program provides the public with free, educational kayaking trips at preserves and historic sites in Sarasota Bay. Kayak trips occur in the evening, on or near a full moon, exposing them to the unique estuarine ecosystem at night.
 - Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
 - Audience: Citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, and families
 - Cost: Approximately \$500 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, and Big Waters Land Trust
 - Communications Cornerstone: Innovative Partnerships
 - Evaluation: Since the paddles began in 2022, 49 participants have gone on four kayak trips around Sarasota Bay
- **National Estuaries Week** – This week-long campaign occurs during September and includes tours, events, and digital engagement to promote bay-based education and stewardship (i.e. Brews and the Bay networking, tours of local preserves and restoration sites, oyster restoration and vertical oyster garden volunteer events, and digital challenges)
 - Origin: Core Program (ongoing for 5+ years)
 - Audience: Citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, families, and environmental professionals
 - Cost: Approximately \$1,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Local government partners, Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Program
 - Communications Cornerstone: Targeted and Tailored Reach

- Evaluation: From 2019 – 2024, SBEP hosted 13 National Estuaries Week events and campaigns

Field Trips and Recreational Experiences Moving Forward: SBEP’s recreational experiences are an important way to directly connect stakeholders to Sarasota Bay and its associated habitats. 2025 feedback indicates the importance of these programs in engaging those who may not have many opportunities to recreate in our natural areas in addition to supporting physical and mental health. SBEP should continue to provide existing recreational experiences and expand upon them as capacity and funds allow. Suggestions include offering more free kayak tours, increasing adaptive paddling programs to other organizations, and leveraging partnerships to offer unique or behind the scenes experiences (i.e., paddling Myakka River State Park when it’s flooded and normally closed to the public).

Volunteer and Citizen Science Opportunities



Left: Volunteers at a South Lido Beach cleanup in 2024; Center: 2023 planting at Tom Bennett Park (photo credit - Will and Marqesha); Right: Eyes on Seagrass volunteers in Sarasota Bay

- **Bay Guardians Volunteers** – Volunteer workdays offer participants the opportunity to be involved with restoration efforts through plantings, cleanups, oyster reef building, and invasive plant removal. Not only do these initiatives benefit habitat and water quality, but they also increase participants’ exposure and investment in local environments and issues.
 - Origin: Core Program (ongoing for 5+ years)
 - Audience: Citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, families, students, employee volunteer programs, community partner organizations
 - Cost: Approximately \$5,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Local government partners
 - Communications Cornerstones: Measurable Results, Strategic Positioning
 - Evaluation: From 2019 - 2024, SBEP hosted over 20 volunteer events with participation of about 120 volunteers each year

- **Eyes on Seagrass** – This citizen science program consists of two annual surveys, in April and July, where volunteers assess seagrass and macroalgae in over 40 sites throughout Sarasota Bay. The results of the survey are then integrated into the Sarasota Bay Ecosystem Health Report Card.
 - Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
 - Audience: Citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, students, marinas, and boaters
 - Cost: Approximately \$1,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: UF/IFAS Extension, Florida Sea Grant Program, and Sarasota County
 - Communications Cornerstones: Science-Based Solutions, Measurable Results
 - Evaluation: Since the program began in 2021, roughly 45-75 volunteers have participated in each survey opportunity. Efforts have also expanded to allow more involvement from school groups. More than half of the volunteers have participated for multiple years since the program began.

Volunteer and Citizen Science Opportunities Moving Forward: Volunteer and citizen science initiatives have consistently been rated in both the 2019-2024 Communications Plan Survey and 2025 Stakeholder Survey as one of the most impactful programs that SBEP offers (see Appendix B). Several participants have stated how eye-opening and beneficial it is to be part of protection and restoration efforts: “This program allows people to take pride in doing something good,” said a volunteer. As capacity allows, SBEP should consider increasing the number and/or variety of volunteer opportunities while also continuing to implement volunteer appreciation strategies. Suggestions also include exploring more targeted partnerships with organizations that require volunteer hours or environmental projects (i.e., Florida Master Naturalists, high school groups, etc.), scheduling different days or times for events so those who work on weekdays or weekends can attend, and giving more advance notice for events.

Community Grants and Sponsorships

- **Bay Partners Grants** – This program offers competitive awards for projects in the Sarasota Bay watershed that promote habitat and water quality restoration, environmental education, community involvement, and stewardship to improve the overall quality of Sarasota Bay and its tributaries.
 - Origin: Core Program (ongoing for 5+ years)
 - Audience: Homeowners’ and neighborhood associations, businesses, religious groups, non-profits, government organizations, and research and education institutions located in the Sarasota Bay watershed
 - Cost: Approximately \$80,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Local non-profits, for-profits, schools, and universities

- Communications Cornerstones: Strategic Positioning, Targeted and Tailored Reach
- Evaluation: Since 2003, SBEP has awarded over \$730,000 to support Bay-friendly projects conducted by over 130 area organizations in Sarasota and Manatee Counties
- **Community Sponsorships** – This program offers funding to support events and initiatives that align with the public engagement and communication goals in the CCMP and Communications Plan (i.e., Sustainable Communities Workshop, Environmental Summit).
 - Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
 - Audience: non-profits, government agencies
 - Cost: Approximately \$20,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Local non-profits and governments
 - Communications Cornerstones: Strategic Positioning, Targeted and Tailored Reach
 - Evaluation: SBEP has awarded over \$12,000 in sponsorships to local organizations leading educational events, cleanups, and environmental workshops in our watershed

Community Grants and Sponsorships Moving Forward: Similar to the volunteer program, feedback from both the 2019-2024 Communications Plan Survey and the 2025 Stakeholder Survey has rated the grants program as one of the most impactful programs that SBEP offers (see Appendix B). These opportunities empower and support communities in stewarding the spaces where they live, work, and play. They allow CCMP goals to be addressed beyond the capacity of the outreach department, help new programs and ideas get off the ground by providing resources to test and validate, and connect SBEP to different stakeholder groups. As capacity allows, SBEP should continue to offer grants and sponsorships.

Within the Bay Partners Grants program, participants have suggested more interaction between past recipients and new grantees to enhance learning and partnership. Examples include quarterly meetings or a more formal workshop that would feature success stories, lessons learned, resources, etc. Over the past several years, SBEP has taken steps to reduce administrative barriers, including streamlining the application, offering assistance on strategy and writing, and creating a pay-to-vendor program for grantees with limited financial resources who qualify. Recent feedback suggests continuing to look at ways to simplify grant management so more organizations may be able to participate.

Community Events

- **Bay Fest** – This annual festival, in partnership with The Bay Park and Sarasota County, celebrates and educates attendees about marine environments and how to take care of them. The event includes live music, food trucks, hands-on activities, and free kayak rides.
 - Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
 - Audience: Families, citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, students
 - Cost: Approximately \$5,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Local governments
 - Communications Cornerstone: Strategic Positioning
 - Evaluation: Since the initiative began in 2023, there have been two events with roughly 1,763 attendees
- **Whitaker Bayou ECommunity Day** – This annual event focuses on celebrating Whitaker Bayou as a resource for the communities in North Sarasota and aims to better connect community health with environmental health. The event includes a paddle cleanup, garden workday, community health resources, and coincides with the Newtown Farmers Market.
 - Origin: Core program (ongoing for 5+ years)
 - Audience: north Sarasota neighborhoods, citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, New College and Ringling College students, gardeners, Sarasota Housing Authority, Boys and Girls Club
 - Cost: Approximately \$2,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Members of the [North Sarasota Environmental Collaborative](#)
 - Communications Cornerstones: Strategic Positioning, Targeted and Tailored Reach
 - Evaluation: From 2019 – 2024, roughly 362 volunteers and 18 partner organizations participated. About 4,437lbs of debris have been removed from Whitaker Bayou. Several teen participants (and their Senior Teen Activities Coordinator) were first-time kayakers and enjoyed coming back to the event in the following years. “Our teens have so much fun and learn so much from it. (Oh, and I LOVE kayaking lol)” - Geoffry Gilot, Senior Teen Activities Coordinator, Boys and Girls Club
- **Restoration Ribbon Cutting Events** – Upon completion of large-scale restoration projects, especially those that received Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding, these events celebrate partnerships and restoration efforts and serve to educate the public about different habitats in the Sarasota Bay watershed through tours and talks. Recent examples include FISH Preserve and G.T. Bray Park.

- Origin: New program created between 2019-2024
- Audience: elected officials, press contacts, SBEP partners, citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, surrounding neighborhoods
- Cost: Approximately \$2,000 per fiscal year
- Partners: Local governments
- Communications Cornerstones: Targeted and Tailored Reach
- Evaluation: Since this initiative began in 2023, there have been three ribbon cutting events at FISH Preserve, G.T. Bray Park, and artificial reef locations in Sarasota Bay

Community Events Moving Forward: Community events celebrate and highlight our area’s natural places and SBEP’s education and restoration efforts in those places. They offer a more social avenue for people to connect with each other, experience natural Florida, and learn about our watershed. They promote SBEP restoration projects as well as raise the profile for less utilized spaces or less-understood resources (i.e., Whitaker Bayou). These events also take advantage of highly utilized areas (i.e., the Bay Park for Bay Fest) to reach a larger audience. SBEP should continue to host or participate in events that help highlight successes and offer a consistent presence and education in target areas or on priority topics. Examples range from hosting large events like those listed above to having a presence at Farmers' Markets, boat shows, home shows, art shows, and other festivals. As (IIJA) restoration projects and ribbon cutting events wrap up, continuing to offer tours (in person or through the SEC Watershed Audio tour program), volunteer events, and/or educational opportunities related to these restored areas will help to keep them on the radar for protection and stewardship.

Stakeholder and Partner Relations

- **General Relations:** SBEP supports and participates in various partner events (i.e., Earth Day, Wild About Nature, etc.), boards, committees (i.e., Science and Environment Council, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council Climate Science Advisory Panel, Florida Estuaries Alliance, etc.), and initiatives that help educate the public about the bay. These collaborations are key for staying connected and in tune with the larger environmental community and for scaling beyond the internal capacity of the SBEP Program.
 - Origin: Core Program (ongoing for 5+ years)
 - Audience: SBEP partners and Management Conference, citizens interested in the environment, and Sarasota Bay
 - Cost: Approximately \$2,000 per fiscal year
 - Partners: Local governments and non-profit organizations
 - Communications Cornerstone: Innovative Partnerships

- Evaluation: From 2019-2024, SBEP staff participated in 18 committees and boards and attended about 10-15 partner events per year

Stakeholder and Partner Relations Moving Forward: Supporting local environmental events, collaborations, and committees is important for strengthening partnerships and increasing stakeholder reach. Roughly 50% of SBEP’s partners and stakeholders have been involved with the program for over five years, including 32% that have been involved for 11 or more years (see Appendix B). Continuing to nourish long-standing relationships within internal committees and external partnerships while also exploring new connections can help maintain a broad and deep reach within the community. These connections can also help fill gaps, provide key insight, and reduce duplication.

To keep things moving in the right direction, SBEP can focus on two main goals: strengthening existing partnerships and expanding to new ones. Continuing to support long-time partners through things like annual events, committee involvement, or offering technical and financial support can help maintain trust and momentum. These relationships often lead to valuable insights, help avoid duplicated efforts, and fill in important gaps. At the same time, SBEP should leverage the opportunity to connect with new audiences by being active in accessible, high-traffic spaces. Events like Beach University at Siesta Key already help SBEP reach a wider crowd, and partnering with places like The Bay Park could also open more doors for engagement. Plans to grow this partnership are already underway.

Communication tools are also key to this expansion strategy. Director’s Notes are an impactful way to respond directly to current concerns like red tide or extreme weather, and the Ecosystem Health Report Card helps turn complex data into packaged updates about the bay. These tools, in combination with high visibility, help keep SBEP top as a trusted source of local environmental information.

Teacher Training and Educator Workshops

- **Teacher Training at New College of Florida:** Each year, SBEP funds three professional development Teacher Training Workshops for K-12 teachers in Manatee and Sarasota counties through Sandra L. Gilchrist, Ph.D., Professor of Biology at New College of Florida. The focus of these workshops is to improve teaching skills and the understanding of science while empowering teachers to use modern techniques, technology, and pedagogy. In addition to the teacher training, in 2022, SBEP also hosted a Sarasota Bay Educators’ Workshop in partnership with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Mote Marine Laboratory, and Sarasota and Manatee County Schools to assess the needs, gaps, and priorities of local teachers and informal educators.
 - Origin: Core Program (ongoing for 5+ years)

- Audience: K-12 teachers in Manatee and Sarasota counties, informal educators, community education partners
- Cost: Approximately \$3,000 per fiscal year
- Partners: New College of Florida
- Communications Cornerstone: Innovative Partnerships
- Evaluation: In 2022, sixty formal and informal educators attended the Sarasota Bay Educators' Workshop. From 2019-2024, about 17 teachers attended one or more of the Teacher Training Workshops provided by Dr. Sandra Gilchrist, and each workshop had an average of 62% of teachers who attended a previous workshop. "Teachers who attended multiple workshops noted that they had adapted some of the activities for their classes. Others indicated that practicing some of the technology along with other teachers gave them confidence to try digital activities in their classes." - Dr. Sandra Gilchrist, New College of Florida

Teacher and Educator Workshops Moving Forward: Teacher and educator workshops are a key channel to integrate bay-related curricula into the classroom and coordinate education across organizations. They also support professional development and recertification requirements for teachers. The long-standing partnership with New College fills a capacity need for direct outreach and training with formal educators, while the SBEP-led educator workshop offers a forum for evaluation and strategic planning with both formal and informal educators. SBEP should consider continuing both initiatives under the guidance of key education partners. Teacher training workshop feedback varied based on grade level taught, but there was interest in incorporating more writing and quantifications into projects and learning more about AI, ChatGPT, and how to access digital databases (such as NOAA or EPA). Several grade level teachers also expressed interest in simple hands-on projects as well as collaborative projects for the classroom setting. Additional feedback from partners suggests regular or annual SBEP visits to classrooms as a "guest speaker" to further support bay-related education. As the educational landscape evolves to integrate new technologies, continuing to engage with teachers can help position SBEP to adaptively support science curricula in a way that will not quickly become outdated.

Educational Tools and Resources

- **General Educational Tools and Resources:** To foster education and awareness about Sarasota Bay, SBEP offers a variety of digital and print resources and tools available to the public. These include the SBEP website, Directors notes and field notes, social media posts, print brochures, digital newsletters, tech kits, videos, event exhibits, online forums, community presentations, and annual reports.
 - Origin: Core Program (ongoing for 5+ years)

- Audience: SBEP boards and committees, SBEP partners, teachers, citizens interested in the environment and Sarasota Bay, volunteers, students, families
- Cost: Approximately \$5,000 per fiscal year
- Partners: Local governments, Citizens Advisory Committee
- Communications Cornerstone: Science-Based Solutions
- Evaluation: There are currently 32,000 active website users, 3,300 followers on Facebook, 2,140 followers on Instagram, 787 followers on LinkedIn, and 3660 newsletter subscribers with an average 40% open rate. Within the last several years, SBEP has focused on enhancing the quality of its social media/digital content with [stakeholder-driven content](#), [topic snapshots](#), and [videos](#). From 2019-2024, SBEP staff gave over 70 public presentations to approximately 2,000 people, created and/or updated more than 40 blogs and webpages that have been visited over 51,000 times, and wrote 20 newsletters and 133 Director’s Notes on items of interest in managing the health of Sarasota Bay

Educational Tools and Resources Moving Forward: A variety of digital and print resources support the various learning styles and settings SBEP operates within, from exhibits and brochures for events, to social media campaigns and presentations. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of these resources in translating scientific concepts in an understandable and relatable way and providing updates on relevant topics. SBEP should continue to promote existing evergreen resources and develop new resources on priority topics as needed. Webpages, social media, short videos, press releases, notes from staff, presentations, and simple handouts can be effective and cost-efficient tools to engage stakeholders with time-sensitive or temporary topics.

Further suggestions include ensuring that education resonates with communities that are further away from the bay and focusing on issues that are actionable at the local level like water quality, stormwater runoff, algae blooms, spills and overflows, upstream engagement, neighborhoods built before stormwater rules, sustainable materials/waste, and low impact/smart development. The program should also continue to highlight solutions that address multiple issues, while being wary of initiatives that are publicized as solutions. Since not all audiences are directly interested in the environment, re-evaluating economic impacts and quality of life benefits of a healthy bay system could expand engagement. As it is hard to predict all of the factors that will impact the management of Sarasota Bay in the future, occasionally revisiting SBEP’s role in responding to different types of issues and current events can help guide resource development.

Public Relations and Marketing

- **General Public Relations and Marketing:** SBEP’s Public Relations (PR) and marketing approach encompasses all its programs with respect to branding, visibility, writing style and voice, media relationships and outreach, and photography and imagery. Currently, SBEP uses nine primary communication channels to market its public engagement, education, and outreach programs (see page 14).
 - Evaluation: From 2019-2024, there were 363 [press mentions](#) by local, regional, and/or national media outlets, a 497% increase from the previous five years. SBEP has hosted exclusive press outings to restoration sites, like the artificial reefs, and to field locations that relate to Sarasota Bay’s health, like the seagrass gain area. The program has also created a new catalog of professional services for aerial and event photography and public material design, rebranded the logo, and developed a style guide (see Appendix A).

Current SBEP Communication Channels

Program or Initiative	Direct Connect email/phone	Word of Mouth	Printed Material	Email Blast, Newsletter	Partner Share	Social media	SBEP Website	Press Release	Presentation
Youth Field Trips	X	X			X				
Veterans Kayaking	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Full Moon Paddles		X		X	X	X	X		
National Estuaries Week		X		X	X	X	X	X	
Bay Guardians Volunteers		X		X	X	X	X	X	
Eyes on Seagrass Citizen Science	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Bay Partners Grants	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Sponsorships	X	X			X				
Bay Fest		X		X	X	X	X	X	
Whitaker Bayou ECommunity Day	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Restoration Ribbon Cutting Events	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Stakeholder and Partner Relations	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Teacher Workshops	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Educational Tools and Resources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Public Relations and Marketing Moving Forward: The 2025 Stakeholder Survey indicates that email/newsletter blasts and direct communication via emails, texts, and phone calls are by far the most effective channels for existing partners and stakeholders to learn about

activities, events, or updates (see Appendix B). As most stakeholders fall within the 55+ age range, these methods of communication may be more familiar or accessible. In addition, strong relationships with press and media outlets can also tend to include more direct forms of communication. As new technologies, social media, and communication platforms evolve, it will be important to adapt and remain relevant within those spheres but also maintain some of the more longstanding forms of communication that certain stakeholders may be used to.

Although SBEP has significantly increased its media profile in recent years, the program should continue to build upon existing press relationships and ensure that these relationships are established through multiple staff members. Examples include offering more press trips or opportunities to get out into the field. SBEP should also continue to position itself as a consistent and reliable source for the media by being available on time-sensitive issues as well as providing regular updates on more predictable or scheduled topics and projects. Leveraging partnerships can also enhance PR and marketing. Examples include multi-organizational coordination of press releases and social media around regional topics, cross promotion with partners and committees, and regular check-in Zoom calls or meetings with partners to stay informed and better connected. Dovetailing with recent efforts of the Science and Environment Council to implement a Collaborative Media Engagement Strategy can help guide SBEP's efforts.

Additional feedback suggests adding a tagline to the program that highlights the economic and quality of life benefits of a healthy bay to further refine the SBEP brand, making sure to highlight successes that may not be as "exciting" (i.e. infrastructure upgrades), continuing to share high quality imagery of the places SBEP is trying to protect, increasing brand visibility at partner events, partnering with groups like Visit Sarasota for cross promotion and marketing support, and considering of a regular newspaper column to help increase the reach of bay-related updates. Lastly, stakeholders highlighted the importance of fostering relationships and maintaining a presence with policymakers either through presentations at public hearings or via the SBEP Policy Board.

Appendix A: SBEP Style Guide



Primary Palette



#01236F



#2594D6



#FF8576

Logo Variations







Fonts

DAZZLE UNICASE	<i>Adobe or special install</i>
<i>Ananda Black</i>	<i>Adobe or special install</i>
Aptos	Microsoft
LEAGUE SPARTAN	Canva
DM SANS	Canva
<i>Playlist Script</i>	Canva

Elements that align with our brand:

- High resolution photos
- Layering of fonts and photos
- Species “cut-outs”
- Editorial style layouts
- High contrast designs
- Textured backgrounds
- Semi-opaque photo backgrounds
- Gradients
- Wave shapes
- Iconography

Updated Jan 2025

Appendix B: Feedback Sources

- 2025 SBEP Stakeholder Survey (169 responses)
- 2025 Interviews and Additional Feedback (data available upon request)

2025 Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Stakeholder Survey

About the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is one of 28 National Estuary Programs in the U.S. We are dedicated to protecting and restoring Sarasota Bay through improving water quality, increasing wildlife habitat, and enhancing natural resources for use and enjoyment by the public. For more information, visit <https://sarasotabay.org>.

Purpose of this survey

This five-minute survey will help SBEP update its five year communications plan, which assesses the status, needs, and priorities for SBEP's public engagement, communication, and education initiatives. We invite you to give feedback on existing initiatives, areas of focus, and how we can better serve you and our stakeholders moving forward. This survey will close on Tuesday, JUNE 10th. We greatly appreciate your insight and feedback!

Rather give feedback in-person or over the phone?

We would be happy to schedule a meeting or call with you. Please email info@sarasotabay.org.

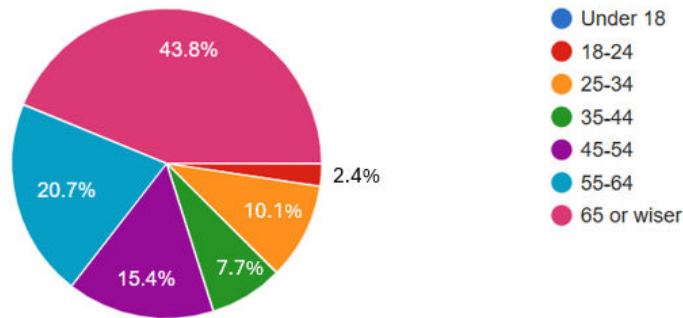
Privacy and security

There are no known risks involved in completing this survey. The information you share with us shall remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this survey unless you obtain prior written consent from a legal guardian. If you are under 18 years of age and wish to participate in this survey, please contact info@sarasotabay.org.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact info@sarasotabay.org. Thank you!

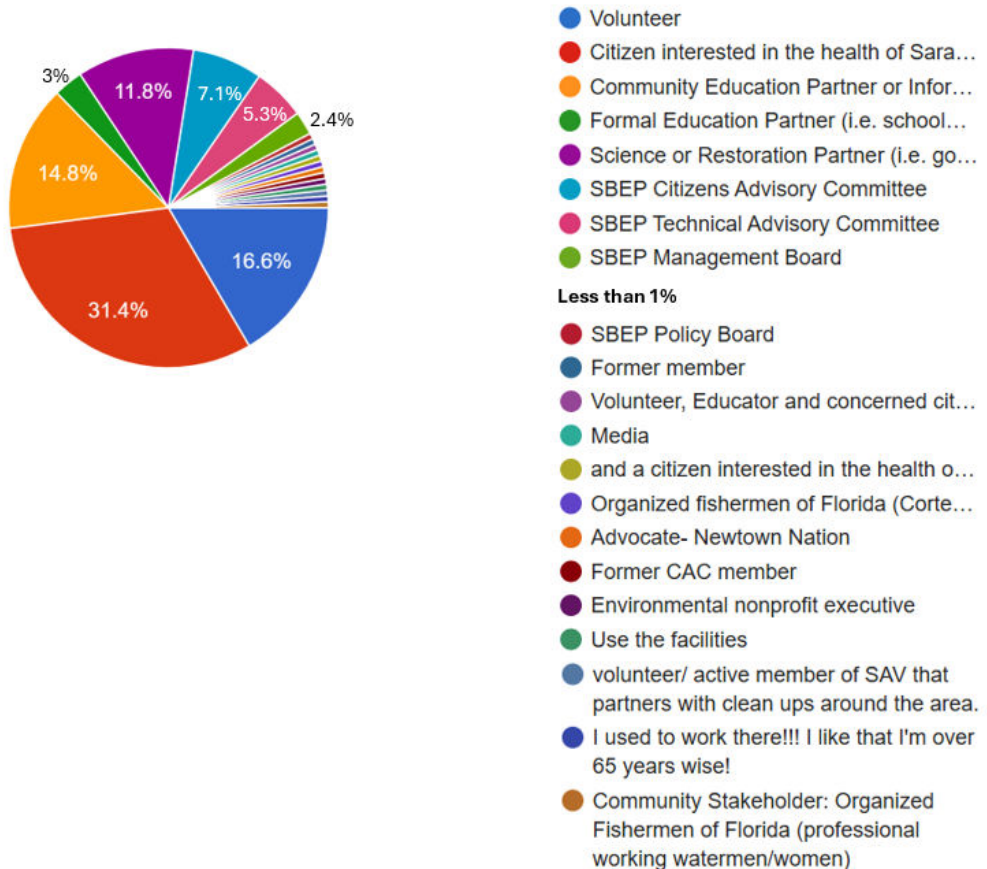
1. What is your age range?

169 responses



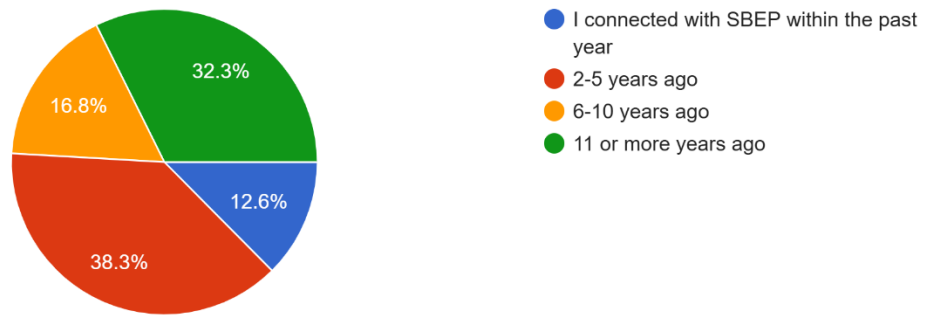
2. Which best describes your relationship with Sarasota Bay Estuary Program? (If you fall under more than one, please pick the one that is closest or best describes you.)

169 responses



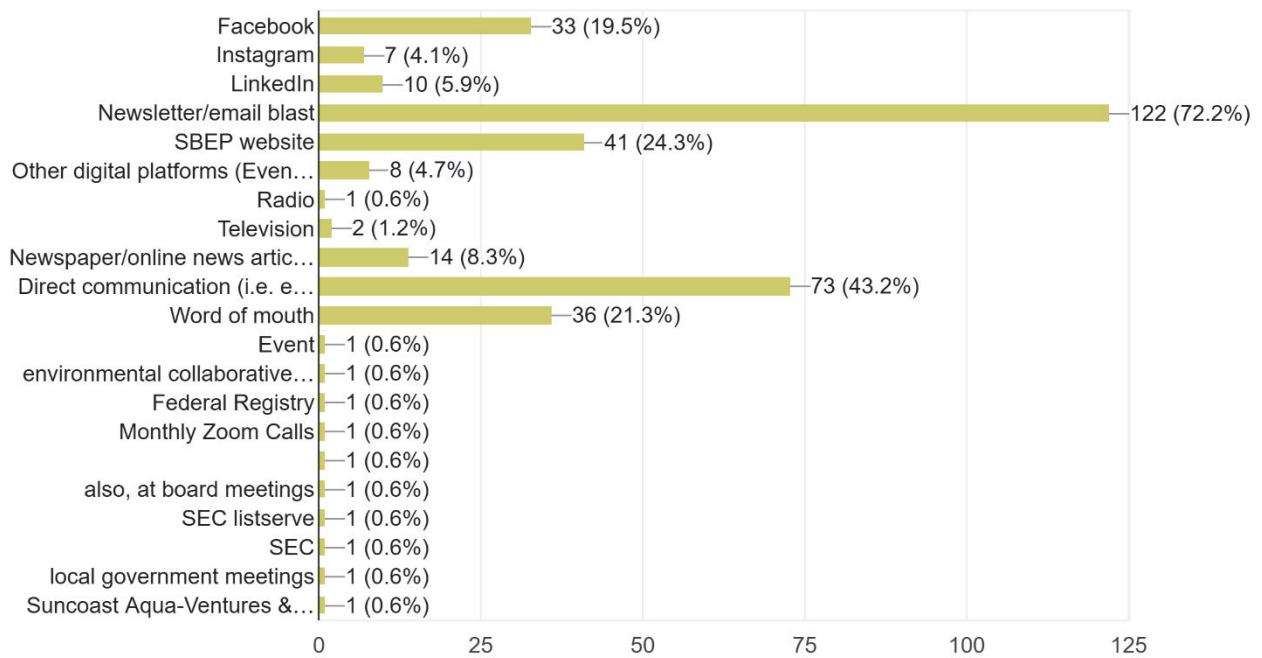
3. When did you first connect with SBEP?

167 responses

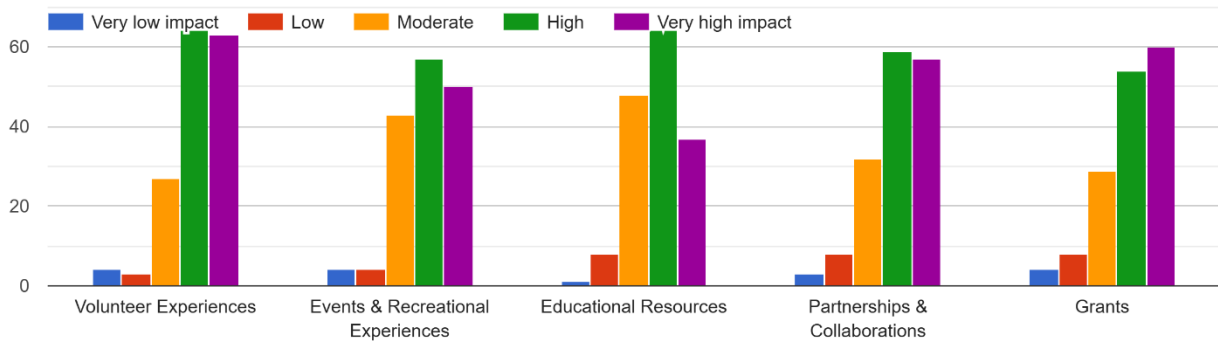


4. How do you usually learn about Sarasota Bay Estuary Program activities, events, or updates? (Please select all that apply)

169 responses



5. Please rate the level of impact for the following public engagement, communication, and education programs. - Volunteer Experiences: Providing ...or bay improvement initiatives (i.e. Bay Partners Grants)



6. Do you have any comments, suggestions, or stories about any of the programs listed in the above question?

47 responses

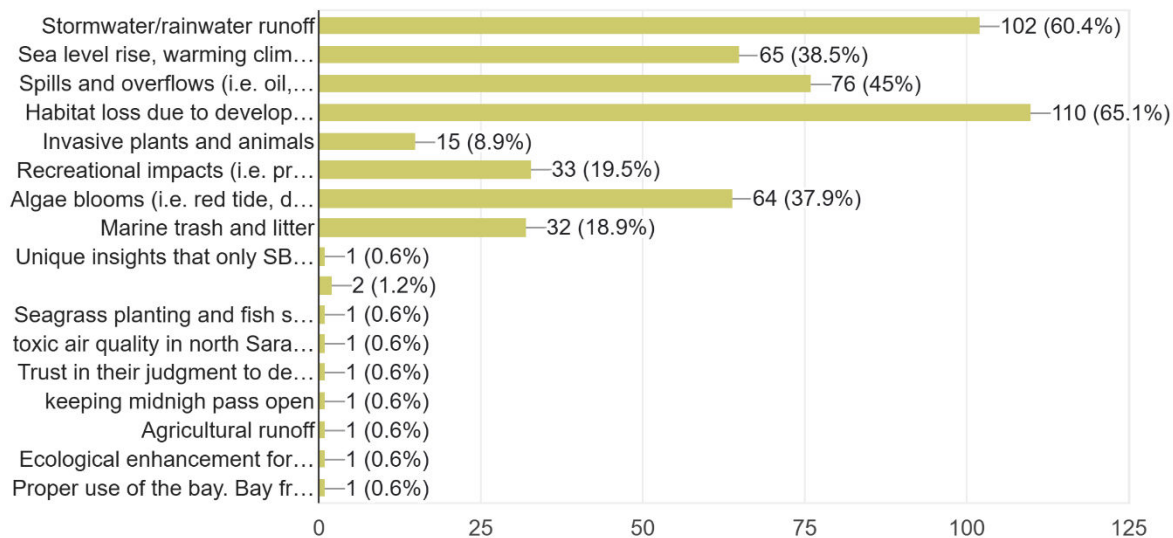
- None
- I'm pretty new here and have volunteered in only one kayak cleanup. But I want to do and learn more.
- At this time I feel that I don't have enough knowledge or experience to give a meaningful rating.
- I'm not sure how often the excellent educational resources are being used, which is why I marked it lower.
- Unleashed dogs at volunteer events so turned around and left.
- Keep up the good work
- Volunteering to clean the bay is eye opener.
- Orange Blossom Community Garden and all of North Sarasota have been positively affected by the work of SBEP through hands on involvement in cleanup days, grants to make improvements to drainage systems contributing to the Estuary, and the Environmental Collaboration.
- Most citizens don't know anything about the program when I speak to them.
- Engaged of people not always involved in clean water issues makes a big impact. They have fun and see things they haven't seen before. Then they tell others. Keep up the great work you do on this front. More events!!
- Sponsor free kayak tours please!
- SBEP has consistently been a resource for accurate information, always available to answer our questions and there to help - whether in-person or remotely.
- Educational outreach opportunities to help the community learn more about our environment have been wonderful. Appreciate the SBEP staff for helping with materials for these events
- A regular newspaper column like the one by Rusty Chinnis would really catch the attention of seniors who still read a newspaper!
- Appreciate the grant program and other environmental advocacy activities!

- I live on Whitaker Bayou and really appreciate the annual Bayou cleanup!!
- Not at this time.
- Educational resources could be addressed more
- Impact on edu for high school should be more - when you approach them, they take their families with them. It has the best legacy. Once you edu the student, the student educates the family. Lee County has classes with middle, high, and elementary. Then they already know by the time they are adults.
- Put some of our edu into the curriculum for the teacher.
- I feel all these programs are essential, as SBEP continues to inform and engage residents of Manatee and Sarasota counties. Grants are huge, but it is always a challenge to "get the word out" on water quality and issues threatening our estuary.
- Events and collaboration in important in helping to have spaces to be utilize more.
- Some of my best memories of volunteer activities were plantings at Tidy Island, building oyster habitat, various cleanup activities, removal of invasive plants etc and of course the kayaking trips with Brad from Mote Marine. Unfortunately, I am getting a bit older and the activities do not seem to have fully recovered to the pre covid level. I am a Florida Master Naturalist and it would be great if you could tie in some of your activities with the FMN program participants.
- SBEP provides so many modes of community education, events and educational resources. All of this work creates a diverse range of ways for people to learn, engage, participate and collaborate with the waterhshed and critical watershed issues.
- I think that y'all have been doing a fantastic job!
- SBEP does great work and over the years our collaborations are some of the most exciting projects. Whether we participate in a carbon sequestering volunteer program, or building oyster bars, you are always willing to try new and inventive projects.
- None no
- Don't stop
- involving citizen scientists helps people to invest in the environment
- The SBEP Team exceeds expectations in ALL areas. SBEP is a trusted resource for data - metrics & evaluation. Consistent in providing impactful community outreach & education. Exemplifies high-caliber partnership - a model for others. "Walks the walk!"
- Need more clean water initiates and habitat projects
- Need to teach more kids and younger generation about the importance of SBEP. they do not realize the importance of clean water ways and healthy water ways to our great state.
- We want to see what your organization is going to do to stop the raw sewage from being dumped into sarasota bay? We also want to to see what you are going to do to keep midnight pass open.
- email is my preferred way to receive info. I don't see alot of emails about upcoming events, so maybe send notice more frequently and further in advance for better planning.
- START and the Healthy Pond Collaborative have worked with the SBEP on a number of projects including the wetlands at Bobby Jones Park and the pond at G.T. Bray Park.
- I'd like to see SBEP have a regular presence/booth at local farmers' markets, art shows, home shows, boat shows/races, festivals, and like events, with references to EACH/ALL public engagement opportunities.

- we love this organization!
- I think you're doing a fantastic job in all areas. The community needs the SBEP
- I wish you would have some volunteer events on Sundays because I always work on Saturdays and can't attend! 😊
- I would love quarterly meetings of grantees or common mission groups so we could learn from each other and potentially partner.
- Participating in seagrass survey is one of my proudest civic achievements.
- I've had a successful experience with your partnership program supporting a microforest project
- Christine & Megan are superstars at coordinating outreach events/activities!
- the Bay Partners Grants have been key to creating some really impactful programs in the past. Thank you.
- none
- Not at this time
- Great organization for funneling volunteer opportunities.
- Addition of the Forum online platform was a great idea!
- Unfamiliar with the 2 unmarked so unable to fairly reply, But Thank You for all efforts.

7. There are numerous environmental and human factors influencing the bay. What are the TOP THREE areas SBEP's public engagement, communication, or education should focus on in the coming years? ONLY SELECT THREE.

169 responses



8. Do you have any general comments about SBEP's public engagement, communication, or education?

67 responses

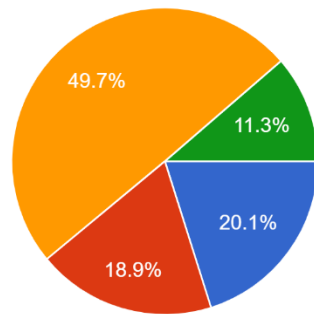
- None
- Amazing education and outreach programs that are well established and successful.
- I believe you consistently do an excellent job.
- High quality, informational, educational
- Other than education, not much we can do about warming, sea level rise and other macro events. Our focus should be on actions that can directly lead to better water quality for our local waters
- talented staff doing impactful hard work!
- Keep spreading the "word"
- Important and valuable work with effective partnerships- thank you!
- It is a pleasure to work with SBEP through participation in various events that do make a positive impact on our waterways through education and hands on activities.
- Concentrate on what happens on the land and upstream to save the bays .
- See above. Thanks for all you do; hope you are able to continue the important work.
- Keep up the good work!!
- Our website is amazing. Keep sharing all the research in the easy to understand format.
- Dave and Randy articles are beyond excellent: I only wish they could have wider circulation!
- SBEP does an amazing job engaging and educating the public. I love to receive emails with newsletters/reports, current trends and information about water quality and how healthy (or unhealthy) the Bay is. I am aware that all this is a direct function of funding and I would be concerned about it being impacted if funding is diminished.
- It is next to impossible not to generate trash but if something is not fabricated, it does not have to be disposed of once it reaches the end of its useful life and does not become trash. I will use a Styrofoam cooler or disposable cup, as an example. We buy it and once used, it ends up in the trash bin because it can't be recycled. Energy is wasted fabricating it and then disposing of it (or worse... removing it from the mangroves and then disposing of it). Plastic is no different.
- I understand that education should be more focused into making users aware of the use
- of sustainable materials. These can be used and recycled indefinitely. Aluminum will not break up, break down and will not become a headache to handle.
- Nope
- You all do a great job!
- Keep up the fantastic work you all do!
- I think the zoom calls are great, it helps to keep each other informed of all players!!
- I would prioritize initiatives that the public can make actionable, local changes toward
- Very beneficial
- They are doing a great job
- Continue sending representatives to all public hearings (even if we don't think it is relevant specifically to our program) as everything that happens on land or sea in our area will Always effect our estuaries.
- SBEP has the power to influence decision makers. Citizens don't have as much influence. SBEP should develop a campaign or tagline, like SBW "a clean bay is everybody's business", about litter, fertilization, etc. for newcomers. They need to be educated about what we do here in FL.

- Citizens can do small activities like cleanups, clams, but we cannot go and change larger things like WWTP discharges.
- SBEP has greatly improved their outreach over the past 5 years; it is more visible. As far as engagement is concerned, we are constantly “preaching to the choir”. We need to figure out how to engage developers, realtors, restaurateurs as these are have impact on the bay and/or relate to others who affect the bay.
- Since we cannot ebb the tide of development, how can we effect change to a smarter, low-impact method of development or re-development.
- no
- Strive to keep verbal and written communication understandable to laypersons. Keep messaging simple. Terms like "climate change" have unfortunately been corrupted by our politics in the US, so my advice would be to limit terms like that.
- We believe you provide a vital resource for education and impacting the environment
- Dave T is great at explaining scientific concepts and getting the word out
- The plans that SBEP is worth continuing.
- SBEP has done an amazing job of reaching many people and organizations with it message over the years. You have made important science accessible and relatable to scientists and non-scientist citizens while supporting community driven initiatives and ideas. From promotional materials to clean-ups to educational events, to local small grants, your work has helped the environment and people of this region in many ways. One thing I would shift would be the administrative requirements of the small grant program. I suggest making that part of the grant receiving less complex and labor intensive to increase accessibility to more organizations and people. Thank you for your service and efforts over the years.
- The "Bay Guardians" events are a great way to engage a large number of people and knock out a project.
- You are all amazing. Thank you for your continued partnership.
- No
- Keep up the good work
- We love partnering with you; all SBEP's programs and engagement are fun and educational.
- I'll mail some into the office.
- See Answer 6 - This Team and those that follow deserve FULL support for the vital & onerous mission they MUST fulfill!
- You are doing a great job and I think your initiatives are meaningful and impactful. I imagine you are limited by resources (time, money, people) but you are doing incredible and necessary work regardless.
- Love the program and people who work there.. Wish more people and programs would volunteer and donate more
- thank you for all you do! you guys rock and do great.
- Thank you
- Very grateful that y'all exist!
- We want to see what your organization is going to do to stop the raw sewage from being dumped into Sarasota Bay? We also want to to see what you are going to do to keep midnight pass open.

- SBEP has top-tier community engagement programs and projects. Between your staple programs and your strategic partnerships, the Sarasota Bay community benefits greatly from your work!
- Love working with you on our partnership events! Hope to do more in the future!
- ALL the above environmental/human factors named are ALL so important. If any of these can be addressed together (cause & effect) or awareness of the same interested audience would be a great thing to consider. Thank You.
- It's very good and helpful in getting more citizens involved with water quality projects.
- I'd like to see SBEP have a regular presence/booth at local farmers' markets, art shows, home shows, boat shows/races, festivals, and like events, with references to EACH/ALL environmental and human factors influencing the bay.
- See above. You're doing a great job!
- Really appreciate your work!
- You all do a great job
- I am grateful for your efforts
- Can new development on agricultural land improve the bay if more water is retained in retention ponds?
- Focus on the climate crisis is very important now, due to rising sea level and the storm surge from Helene in 2024.
- Love working with you!
- Very agreeable and helpful staff
- Can you become a leading voice of regenerative ecotourism in Sarasota? We need to engage the business community in the full living ecosystem of protecting the bays health. Also, more innovation in living seawalls
- Keep it up. Don't forget how important the science and environment Council is. You didn't even list it as one of the ways that you get your word out
- Thank you for all you do.
- Public engagement is key. We need to inform people and keep them up to date in things related to the bay and our local estuary
- Very grateful for SBEP's work. It is my observation that across social and economic demographics in Sarasota, too few people make connection between what they do at home/school/work, on the roads, and out-and-about to the health of our water and the bay.
- You all are doing a GREAT job. Frankly, an impossible one, but you're doing it. AND asking for feedback to do it even better - seriously keep it up. You all should be so proud.
- Great program, great people.
- Keep up the great work, thank you
- I Hope I can be of more assistance to you this year. (Health limits). You are Valued and needed. Thank you all,

9. Which part of the county do you live near?

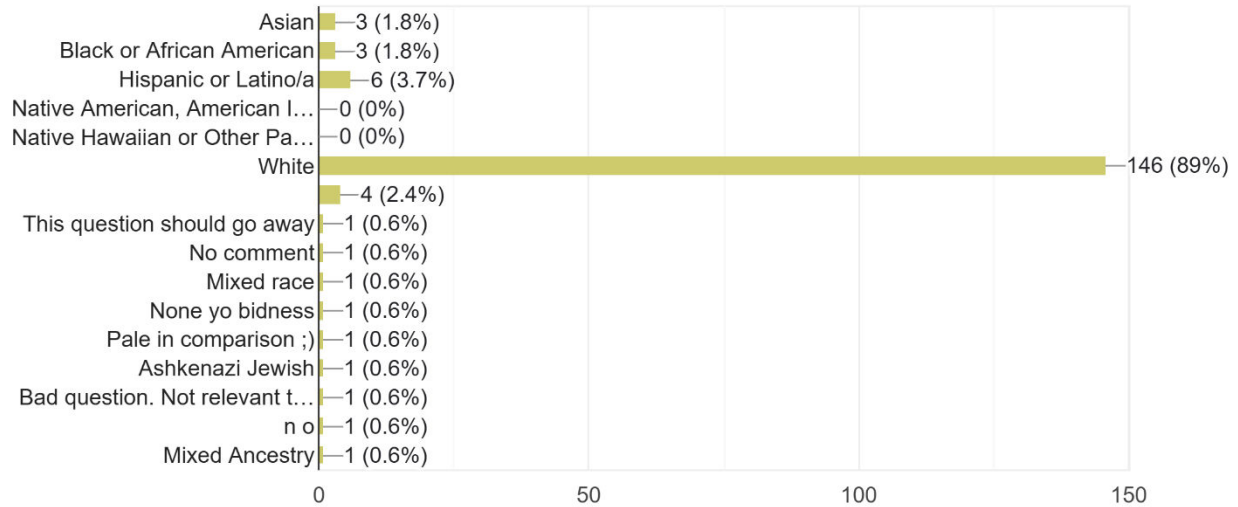
159 responses



- North Manatee County (i.e. Anna Maria, Holmes Beach, Palmetto, Ellenton, Palma Sola)
- South Manatee County (i.e. Longboat Key, South Bradenton, Bayshore Gardens, Whitfield)
- North Sarasota County (i.e. City of Sarasota, University, Bee Ridge, Siesta Key)
- South Sarasota County (i.e. Nokomis, North Port, Osprey, Casey Key)

10. Voluntary Question: Which of the following best describes you? (You may check all that apply or decline to answer.)

164 responses



References

Hindsley, PR, Debure, KR, and Morgan, OA. (2012). *The Sarasota Bay Economic Valuation Project*. 252 pp.

United States Census Bureau. (2024). *Population Estimates, July 1, 2024 (V2024)*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table>.



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