



# 2025 - 2030 FINANCE PLAN

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**Sarasota Bay Estuary Program**

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Finance Background .....	2
Current Operations .....	4
Leveraging .....	8
Funding Priorities .....	11
Financial Strategy .....	12
Concluding Remarks .....	14

# Executive Summary

This document is an update to the long-range financial plan for the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP). The plan is intended to outline SBEP's current finances and explore opportunities for new revenue sources for implementing the [Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#) (CCMP) revised in 2022.

Sarasota Bay was significantly degraded by 1950 due to dredge and fill activities and marsh drainage occurring in the 1920's through 1950's. The Program is addressing these problems by focusing on shoreline naturalization and tributaries while building upon past efforts that improved water quality and seagrass coverage in the bay.

This strategy addresses funding for:

- Program operations
- Technical and outreach projects
- Implementation of the 5-year habitat restoration plan
- Updated research priorities
- Implementation of the CCMP revised in 2022

The following assumptions have been made in developing the plan:

- Local contributions increased in FY25 and will be maintained at this new level
- National Estuary Program (NEP) EPA-320 funding will continue at the current level
- SWFWMD will continue to support the SBEP at its current levels until FY29

This Long-Range Finance Plan recommends that SBEP:

- Continue to seek grant funds for Sarasota Bay projects
- Work with the Florida Estuaries Alliance to pursue additional funds for projects
- Maintain the Sarasota Bay Environmental Fund to accept donations and settlement funds
- Apply any increase in federal appropriations to specified projects and programmatic priorities

## Finance Background

### Program History

The Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program (SBEP) began in June 1989. Federal funding for the Program was initially appropriated by Congress through section 320 of the Water Quality Act of 1987. Although there are 28 NEPs, Sarasota Bay was one of six National Estuary Programs (NEPs) listed in the Act. Federal funding through section 320 has oscillated over the years, from a low of \$200,000 in the mid 1990's to \$850,000 beginning in fiscal year 2024 and continuing through fiscal year 2026.

Local governments and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) pledged financial support in 1990, providing \$266,000 annually, which supplemented federal funds. Local funding increased modestly (\$30,000) over the same period with the

addition of the City of Bradenton and the Town of Longboat Key in 2004, contributing \$15,000 each. These funds have been used for internal operations and projects. In certain years, SBEP used reserves and grants to maintain operations and projects in addressing numeric nutrient criteria while absorbing cuts in federal allocations.

For the first five years (1989-94), SBEP focused on assessing the health and ecological condition of the Bay proper and its watershed. Based on this assessment, a plan was developed that outlined a strategy for the management and restoration of the Bay. The first two federal (EPA) grants for SBEP were “passed through” the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). At that time, the Governor and FDEP Secretary assigned responsibility to SWFWMD for program management. This disconnect resulted in complications in contracting, lack of working capital and reimbursement issues. Most of the technical work was, therefore, funded directly from EPA to local contractors selected through competitive processes, while staff salaries and benefits were covered by a contract between SWFWMD and FDEP. There were also several State Legislative appropriations used to provide working capital, allowing the program to fund projects beginning in 1993. “Action now” became a principal theme of SBEP, as a number of Early Action Demonstration Projects were funded by EPA and other partners for construction.

In 1993, the Sarasota Bay Framework for Action was released. At that time, it was recognized that a substantial public investment (Capital Improvement Projects) would be required to reduce nitrogen pollution (estimated in 1995 as 680% above pristine), improve water quality and restore the ecological integrity of the Bay. The CCMP outlined specific actions assigning responsibility for implementation to SBEP staff and partners, including: septic to sewer program(s); wastewater treatment plant consolidation; reclaimed water systems; storm water retrofit; restoration of reefs, oysters and wetlands; and environmental educational programs to address homeowner pollution and resource protection. The estimated cost for restoration was set at \$500 million.

#### **Initial CCMP Implementation – Financing**

EPA literature and guidance documents on financing marine and estuarine protection suggested that successful programs needed to identify appropriate funding source(s) to meet each main objective, develop a competitive edge to leverage funds from multiple sources, and influence regional policy to support financing the CCMP.

SBEP CCMP (1995) incorporated these strategies and established responsibilities for local governments to support this comprehensive regional action. Task forces were established for each of the six Action Plans, which were incorporated into local Comprehensive Plans, thus establishing policy, funding and staff opportunity to participate in SBEP directed restoration.

SBEP and local partners identified funding sources that would be most appropriate to support particular action items within each of the six CCMP Action Plans. The potential sources included:

- State Revolving Loans \*
- Utility Fees
- P2000/Florida Forever \*
- State and Congressional Appropriations
- State Grants
- Local taxes
- State SWIM funds \*
- FDEP fines (Pollution Recovery Trust Funds) \*
- Mitigation - Permitting Actions
- US Army Corps of Engineers (Section 1135) \*
- Manasota Basin Board Initiatives \*
- Special Assessment Districts (Wastewater and Storm-water projects)
- Stormwater Environmental Utility fees
- NOAA Community Based Grants \*
- Private Contributions
- EPA (Climate Ready and other) grants \*
- SWFWMD Cooperative Funding (50/50 matching above) \*
- SWFWMD New Water Source Initiative \*
- EPA Wetlands Grants
- EPA Non-Point Source Grants (restricted)
- US F&WS restoration grants
- FWC (Fresh and Saltwater grants)
- EPA Gulf of Mexico Program grants

\* not currently available to SBEP

In 1996, it took approximately one year to decide to maintain SBEP staff. Afterward, the Policy and Management Board members and additional local/state government staff worked in tandem with SBEP staff to implement the CCMP. The funds for Bay improvement were leveraged using the sources above. That same year, Sarasota Bay became a SWFWMD Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) waterbody. This designation made state and regional funds available for CCMP implementation. The SWFWMD Manasota Basin Board (now dissolved) strongly supported CCMP implementation and provided restoration funding every year. The Manasota Basin Board also provided a significant share of the capital improvements financing regional reclaimed wastewater and stormwater projects while County natural resource departments worked in concert with SBEP, FDEP and SWFWMD-SWIM staff supporting major habitat restoration projects throughout the watershed.

## Current Operations

### **SBEP Interlocal Agreement**

In 2004, SBEP Interlocal Agreement (IA) was approved, establishing the Sarasota Bay watershed as an Independent Special District in Florida (*Florida Statutes Chapter 189: Uniform Special District Accountability Act.*) The Agreement also established funding

commitments for each party in the agreement and combined with the federal allocation from the base program.

Sarasota County	\$50,000
Manatee County	\$50,000
City of Sarasota	\$33,000
City of Bradenton	\$15,000
Town of Longboat Key	\$15,000
SWFWMD	\$133,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$296,000</b>

In 2024, SBEP requested a 60 percent increase to the funding provided by the local government partners. This was the first requested increase since the Interlocal Agreement was signed in 2004. With the exception of SWFWMD, all partners agreed to increase their funding commitment beginning in FY2025. These new contribution levels were formalized by an amendment to the Interlocal Agreement. The new funding levels are as follows:

Sarasota County	\$80,000
Manatee County	\$80,000
City of Sarasota	\$50,000
City of Bradenton	\$25,000
Town of Longboat Key	\$25,000
SWFWMD	\$133,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$393,000</b>

Although SWFWMD did not increase funding for SBEP, a new five-year Cooperative Agreement was signed in 2025 and maintains their funding commitment of \$133,000 annually through fiscal year 2029. SWFWMD’s contribution amount remains in the existing Interlocal Agreement, and is also detailed in the latest five-year Cooperative Agreement agreed to by both parties.

### **Federal Allocations (Congressional Appropriations)**

Since 1995, the annual federal appropriation for each NEP has increased from \$200,000 initially to a peak of \$850,000. Through the collective participation of local governments and education efforts through the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) comprising the 28 NEP directors, NEP appropriations have received bi-partisan support in Congress. Federal funding was affected, however, by the recession beginning in 2006, resulting in reduced programmatic allocations approximating \$400,000 (FY 06 and 07) and a level of \$538,000 - 598,000 annually between FY11-15. In FY17, funding stabilized at \$600,000 and began a period of increase until reaching \$850,000 in FY23-25.

### **Federal Allocations (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law/Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)**

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), now the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), provided a total award of \$4,549,000 to be distributed over a five-year period, with a total Budget Period of 10/01/2022 to 09/30/2027. If the funds are not fully expended by

September 30, 2027, SBEP can request a two-year, no-cost time extension from EPA.

The first installment of the award, years one and two combined, was \$1,819,600 and was received by SBEP in February 2023. Two additional awards of \$909,800 were received in April and December 2024. The final award of \$909,800 is anticipated sometime in FY26. Using the first two years of funding, SBEP staff completed habitat restoration projects at FISH Preserve and GT Bray Park, both in Manatee County. The third habitat restoration project, completed with BIL/IIJA funds, was the resumption of SBEP’s prior artificial reef efforts. Working with its consultants and contractors, SBEP placed four “deep cover” artificial reef modules at each of six permitted reef sites in Sarasota Bay.

Projects currently underway include debris removal and boardwalk reconstruction at BayWalk Preserve in Sarasota, shoreline restoration and enhanced public access in Sarasota’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, and design and installation of 3-D printed concrete mangrove panels to overlay the Town of Longboat Key’s fiberglass seawall at their Bayfront Park. Upcoming projects include design and permitting for shoreline restoration in Manatee County’s Rose Park, and stormwater treatment improvements for Matheny Creek in Sarasota County. Pending the award of the final year of IIJA funding, planned projects include construction of the Rose Park living shoreline and shoreline restoration for the City of Sarasota’s Bayfront Park. As of September 2025, \$2,390,337 of BIL/IIJA funding has been expended.

PROJECT	COMPLETION	EXPENDED	ENCUMBERED BUT NOT YET EXPENDED
FISH Preserve	Oct 2023	700,797	5,000 (signage)
GT Bray Park	Sept 2024	918,501	0
Artificial Reefs	May 2024	67,132	0
LBK Living Seawall	Aug 2025	428,987	46,739 (final payment)
BayWalk Preserve	Oct 2025	178,638	93,349 (remaining work)
MLK Park	May 2026	96,282	290,125 (eng & construction)

**SBEP Workplan**

Below is the expected operating budget for the next fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025. The budget is based on anticipated federal funding of \$850,000 and identifies programmatic revenues, in-house expenses and projects to be implemented with base program funds. It is anticipated that the internal budget will rise modestly over the next five years with inflation. The recent increase in local government contributions has facilitated increases in some budget line items, primarily project line items. Budget revisions and cost cutting measures will be implemented as necessary in response to any fluctuations in federal funding.

**FY26 Workplan Budget Summary (October 1, 2025 - September 30, 2026)**

<b><u>REVENUES</u></b>	
<b>EPA FUNDING:</b>	<b>\$850,000</b>
SWFWMD	133,000
Manatee County	80,000
Sarasota County	80,000
City of Sarasota	50,000
City of Bradenton	25,000
Town of Longboat Key	25,000
In-kind Match	<u>582,000</u>
<b>LOCAL FUNDING:</b>	<b>\$975,000</b>
Non-matching funds retained for community grants	(125,000)
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1,700,000</b>
<b><u>OPERATING EXPENSES</u></b>	
Direct Personnel Expenses	490,000
Other Personnel Expenses	220,000
Travel/Conferences	19,275
Contractual	
Legal Services	12,000
Accounting/Auditing	30,550
Payroll Services	3,800
Contract Procurement	2,000
Computer Support	12,500
Digital/Web Support	15,000
Operations	
General Administration – Operations	800
Liability/Workers Compensation	19,000
Postage/Courier	275
Advertising	1,200
Office Supplies	2,000
Subscriptions/Dues	1,200
Building Lease	42,000
Telecommunications	8,500
Office Equipment Repair	300
Copier Machine Lease	2,400
Capital Expenditure	4,000
Contingency	<u>16,000</u>

<b>OPERATING EXPENSES SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>\$902,800</b>
<b>PROJECT EXPENSES:</b>	
Macroalgae	200
Biological Monitoring	80,000
Science and Research	25,000
Habitat Restoration and Maintenance	90,000
Community Action Plan	20,000
Program Development	0
In-Kind Match*	<u>582,000</u>
<b>PROJECT EXPENSES SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>\$797,200</b>
<b>TOTAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT EXPENSES:</b>	<b>\$1,700,000</b>
 <b>Non-Workplan Expenses**</b>	
Community Grants and Sponsorships: \$125,000	
National Estuary Program Association Dues: \$4,500	
Administrative Expenses: \$5,000	
 <i>* SBEP requests that up to \$675,000 from other local projects may be used as Federal match at the discretion of the program and EPA through the SBEP CCMP Action Plans.</i>	
 <i>** These lines represent additional expenses not incorporated within the EPA Workplan. These expenses are paid directly through local funding and retained earnings from the program and are not EPA reimbursable expenses.</i>	

**External Audits**

SBEP undergoes a complete external financial audit each year. Audit reports and financial statements covering the past five years are available on the SBEP website ([Audit Reports](#)). For the past five years, the Independent Auditor’s Report delivered an *unmodified opinion*, which is the highest/best report they can give.

**Leveraging**

Annually, despite oscillation in the federal allocation, SBEP has used reserves and grant funds to support operations and projects. Supplemental grant funds and donations of \$500,000 - \$1 million annually have been secured by SBEP resulting in total annual budgets between \$2 to \$3 million.

The base Workplan has supported multiple major projects over the past five years, including development of a Water Quality Protection Plan for Sarasota Bay and its creeks and tributaries, continued monitoring of seagrass and macroalgae in Sarasota Bay, developing and annually updating SBEP's Ecosystem Health Report Card, assessments of the stocks and diversity of finfish in Sarasota Bay, completion of multiple habitat restoration projects, and various outreach and education projects to foster public involvement in the program.

### **Impact of External Grants**

SBEP has been able to accomplish many projects and programs by successfully competing for grants at the state and federal level, and grants from private foundations through our nonprofit partnerships. When allowable, these grants include a percentage (usually 10%) of the total grant amount to be used for costs associated with managing the grant (staff salary, travel, incidentals, etc.). This has helped offset some of the general programmatic expenses normally charged to the annual EPA grant.

### **Gulf Coast Community Foundation Environmental Fund**

In 2020, SBEP began receiving payments from Sarasota County in accordance with the terms of a legal settlement agreement. To ensure separation between administrative and programmatic accounts and the settlement funds, SBEP established the Sarasota Bay Environmental Fund with the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. Since 2020, the scope of the Environmental Fund has expanded to become a repository for additional stipulated funds, organizational contributions and private donations. These assets are kept separate from SBEP's operating account, are not part of the annual workplan budget, and are not used as a match for EPA 320 funding.

Stipulated payments to SBEP are only used for the express purpose of reasonable and customary expenses associated with habitat restoration (e.g., artificial reefs, seagrasses, oyster beds, wetlands) or water quality improvement projects (e.g., low impact development projects) within the impacted watershed as designated by the terms of the settlement agreement. Unrestricted contributions can be used for any environmental improvements that benefit Sarasota Bay and its watershed, as recommended by the Project Advisory Committee

To manage the funds earmarked to the Sarasota Bay Environmental Fund, SBEP Policy Board voted to create a Project Advisory Committee that oversees disbursement from the Environmental Fund. SBEP provides recommendations to the Project Advisory Committee on appropriate projects that are consistent with the intended purpose of the fund and any relevant settlement restrictions. SBEP continuously looks for project opportunities that align SBEP restoration priorities with the stated goals of the Environmental Fund and brings them to the committee for approval on a rolling basis.

To date, \$208,990 has been received from private donations and/or fines from various regulatory agencies. As of September 2025, a total of \$151,250 has been encumbered

and/or already spent on specific habitat restoration projects, including GT Bray, FISH Preserve Phase IV, Vertical Oyster Gardens, Artificial Reefs, and design and permitting for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park.

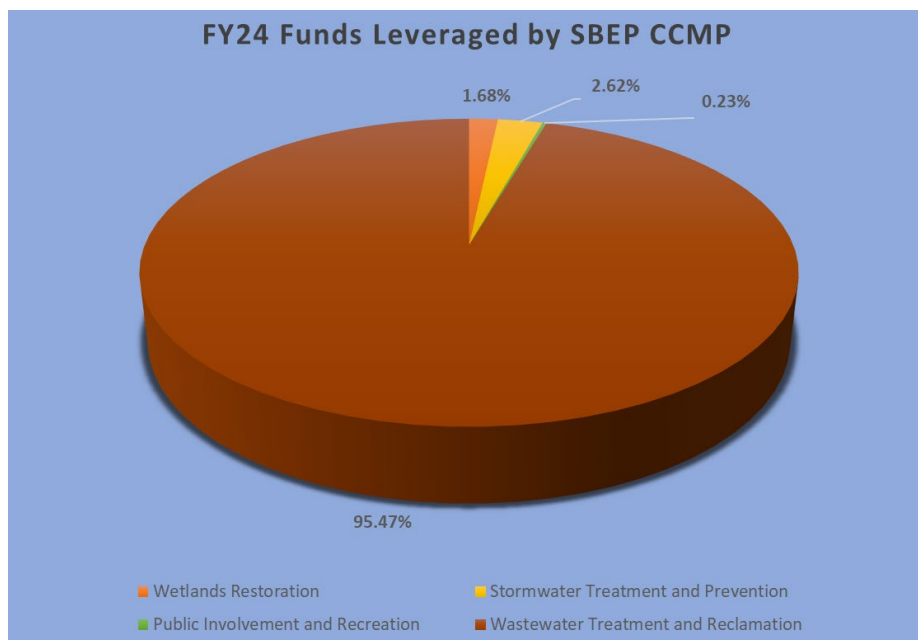
### Reserves

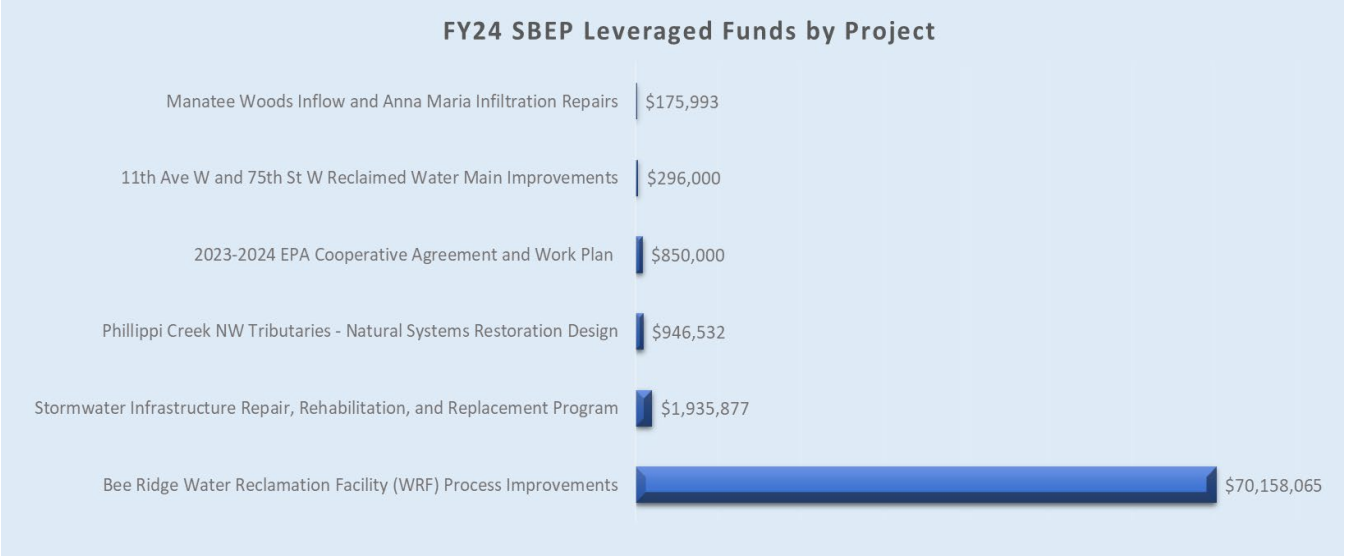
Spending policies in Florida and at the national level have changed since 2010, resulting in a reduction in grant funds available to SBEP. Past use of internal funds for projects has resulted in a reduction of SBEP reserves by half since 2010, leveling off at approximately \$300,000 in 2020. Currently, SBEP holds its reserve funds in an account with Florida Prime, a government investment pool. This account has yielded an annual rate of return averaging five percent. As of 2025, the balance in this account has risen to nearly \$400,000. This increase has been achieved by allowing interest to accumulate and by maintaining the fund as an emergency-only reserve separate from our operating account. SBEP has not needed to utilize any reserve funds over the past five years.

Annual external financial audits, coupled with a previous SWFWMD compliance audit, have demonstrated that SBEP is fiscally sound with approximately six months of operating reserves available to carry the program into the next fiscal cycle. Interest earned on the account allows the SBEP to compensate for the effects of inflation. If the operating budget increases during the next five years, SBEP will set aside additional funds as needed to maintain a balance that reflects six months of operating reserves.

### Additional Leveraging – Partner Projects

For the FY24 NEPORT submission, SBEP reported eight habitat projects that created or restored 85.1 acres. In addition, SBEP identified over \$74.3 million in associated leveraged funds. The source and distribution of leveraged funds can be seen in the following graphs:





# Funding Priorities

## Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan – 2022 Update

The CCMP strategy is composed of four Action Plans. Each Action Plan has a high-level goal that is supported by quantifiable objectives that are elaborated on by specific activities. Each objective is assigned five-year performance metrics, benefits, and location. Each activity is assigned a timeframe, list of collaborators, and estimated five-year costs and potential funding sources. SBEP’s role in implementing the CCMP priorities is clearly defined for each activity.

Priority areas identified in the 2022 CCMP include:

- **Water Quality and Quantity:** Improve water quality and the timing, quantity, and distribution of freshwater flow to the estuary.
- **Watershed Habitats:** Restore shoreline, wetland, and bay habitats and eliminate future losses.
- **Fish and Wildlife:** Protect, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife populations in SBEP bays and watersheds.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage, educate, and encourage environmental stewardship of Sarasota Bay and increase community connections to the estuary through low impact recreational use and enjoyment.

For a detailed listing of our Action Plans for implementing these four priorities, including projected costs, please see Appendix A: Action Plans at A Glance in the [2022 CCMP update](#).

## **CCMP and WQPP Implementation**

Over \$300 million worth of projects have been implemented over the past five to ten years related to stormwater retrofits and wastewater upgrades. These projects have already been included in our recently completed [Water Quality Protection Plan](#) (WQPP) for Sarasota Bay. The WQPP also lists more than \$400 million worth of stormwater retrofits and wastewater upgrades that local governments have agreed to complete—as funds and priorities allow—over the next five to ten years. By carrying out these projects, our local government partners are covering over 90% of the costs of implementing the CCMP Action Plans. These projects are being funded by increases in stormwater and wastewater fees paid by local residents, not from state or federal government funding. The WQPP is the best source of information about CCMP implementation, including specific project details, costs and funding.

## **New Leadership in 2025**

On September 12, 2025, the SBEP Policy Board selected Dr. Ryan Gandy as the program’s new Executive Director. Dr. Gandy will begin leading the organization on November 17, 2025. Therefore, staff remain open to adjusting funding priorities to follow the guidance of the next Executive Director and to address emerging issues and new opportunities. Specific projects and funding priorities are identified and described each year in our Annual Workplan and Budget.

## **Financial Strategy**

Below is a proposed five-year plan of action to maintain current operations while implementing the priorities identified in the 2022 CCMP. Along with doing our part to support NEP reauthorization, due to uncertainties with future Federal funding, a primary strategy for upcoming years will be to further diversify our revenue sources.

## **NEP Reauthorization**

A bill to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, the Enhancing Science, Treatment, and Upkeep of America’s Resilient and Important Estuarine Systems (ESTUARIES) Act, has been introduced in the House and Senate. The House bill is being led by Rep. Shomari Figures (D-AL-02) and Rep. Brian Mast (R-FL-21) alongside Reps. Rick Larsen (D-WA-02), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR-01), Mike Haridopolos (R-FL-08), and Nick Lalota (R-NY-01). The Senate version of the bill was also introduced led by Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA). SBEP will support the new bill by sharing any news and press releases on social media, as appropriate. We will also reach out to our local congressional representatives to ask them to co-sponsor the relevant bill. Reauthorization from 2026-3031 as introduced by the House and Senate proposes continuing funding of 850,000 for each NEP.

## **Florida Estuaries Alliance**

The mission of the Florida Estuaries Alliance is to, “help advance the State of Florida as a national leader in coastal and estuarine restoration, research, stewardship and education.” It offers a forum for collaboration, allows partners to leverage resources, and

provides a consistent framework for the management of estuarine resources across the state. The Florida Estuaries Alliance supports member governments' implementation of the CCMPs. The Alliance also aims to better inform statewide leaders and the public about the important environmental, economic and cultural assets associated with Florida's estuaries.

SBEP recently reinvigorated the Florida Estuaries Alliance by taking the lead on planning the first meeting to occur in several years. In June of 2024, staff from all four National Estuary Programs in Florida: Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program, and Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership, met to share best practices and collaborate around common goals and long-term strategies for priority programs across Florida. The full day workshop comprised of group discussion around shared priorities, as well as differences in approach based on local needs. The afternoon break-out groups homed in on topics like research and restoration, outreach, fundraising, and financial operations. The group agreed to renew their formal commitment to the Alliance and plan to meet on an annual basis.

Shared priorities of the Florida Estuary Alliance include:

- Implement a long-term programmatic strategy that will support priority projects and programs and help meet federal, state and local estuarine restoration, stewardship and protections goals.
- Facilitate partnering and collaboration on current and future projects, to promote efficient use of limited resources and reduce duplication of effort.
- Protect, preserve and enhance federal, state and local priority water bodies through projects and programs.
- Work with public and private sector partners to support a sustained source of funding for the partners.

### **Grants and Partnerships**

With the availability of BIL/IJA funds beginning in 2023, SBEP has been focused on managing and completing those projects to prioritize expending that funding award. However, over the next five years, SBEP plans to increase efforts to pursue external grants and donations to supplement the organization's revenue as BIL/IJA projects wind down.

By partnering with 501(c)(3) organizations such as the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage and the Longboat Key Association, SBEP was eligible to apply for grants from the Barancik Foundation. Over the next five years, we intend to direct more efforts towards building similar relationships with philanthropic foundations and local nonprofits that share our goal of protecting Sarasota Bay and its watershed. Donations from private individuals, community groups and environmental clubs are also now able to be directed to our designated Sarasota Bay Environmental Fund at the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. This allows donors to direct their funds towards specific restoration projects

or programs, not the daily operating costs of the SBEP. It is our belief that providing an option for local residents to make a targeted, tax-deductible contribution to a 501(c)(3) organization increases trust and thereby encourages more financial support of our initiatives. All contributions are used for restoration projects and programs that directly benefit Sarasota Bay.

### **Local Government Funding**

SBEP successfully updated our Interlocal Agreement to increase the local government partners' annual contributions beginning in fiscal year 2025. This 60 percent increase was agreed to by all five of our city, town and county partners and is the first increase implemented since the interlocal agreement was signed over 20 years ago. A future objective is to establish a regular schedule of percentage increases on a five- or ten-year basis to ensure that partner contributions keep up with the pace of inflation.

The State of Florida is represented on our Policy Board by two organizations, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Although SWFWMD was unable to increase their annual funding at this time, they remain SBEP's single largest non-federal funding partner. SWFWMD has also stated that they may reopen cooperative funding opportunities in future years, and those awards could be used to fund local projects led by SBEP. Lastly, FDEP does not currently contribute financially to SBEP's annual Workplan. However, since some Florida NEPs do receive funds through the agency, we will continue to have discussions with FDEP leadership to explore potential avenues for FDEP to fund future projects or programs.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is well-positioned to sustain and expand its restoration and conservation efforts in the years ahead. Thanks to strong financial stewardship, a stable base of local government support, and strategic leveraging of federal and philanthropic funds, SBEP remains a model for collaborative environmental management. However, as we look toward the future, it is critical to continue diversifying our funding portfolio and strengthening relationships with new partners, including foundations, private donors, and nonprofit organizations. In particular, SBEP will continue advocating for sustained or increased support from the State of Florida, including renewed cooperative funding from SWFWMD and potential programmatic contributions from FDEP. With new leadership on the horizon, SBEP is poised to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities, align funding priorities with the updated Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, and expand its impact across the watershed. By working in concert with elected officials, local communities, and regional stakeholders, SBEP can continue to restore and protect the ecological integrity of Sarasota Bay for future generations.



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