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Field Note: Summer in Sarasota Bay

Welcome to Field Notes, a new blog series offering on-the-ground insights from our Staff Scientist. Whether it's tracking seasonal changes, monitoring habitat health, or highlighting unexpected findings, Field Notes brings you closer to the science behind our coastal ecosystems in Sarasota Bay. Click below to read our latest article.

Field Note: Summer in Sarasota Bay

We are Hiring! SBEP Executive Director



SBEP is seeking qualified applicants for the Executive Director position. The successful applicant will have demonstrated experience in effectively managing multi-entity environmental, scientific and/or engineering programs; fostering and maintaining collaborative approaches to complex environmental issues; the ability to facilitate consensus among diverse and sometimes conflicting stakeholders; success in raising funds from public and private sectors, including federal, state and local grants; and the ability to manage an effective and talented staff.

Applications are due by 2:00 P.M. EST on Friday, August 8, 2025.

Learn More & Apply

Bay Partners Grants Program awards $50,000 for habitat, education, and stewardship initiatives



Every year, SBEP's Bay Partners Grants Program awards funding to local organizations for projects that promote habitat and water quality restoration, environmental education, community involvement, and stewardship to improve the overall quality of Sarasota Bay. This year, SBEP awarded $50,087 to seven organizations in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Congratulations to those who were selected! We look forward to working with you on your impactful projects.

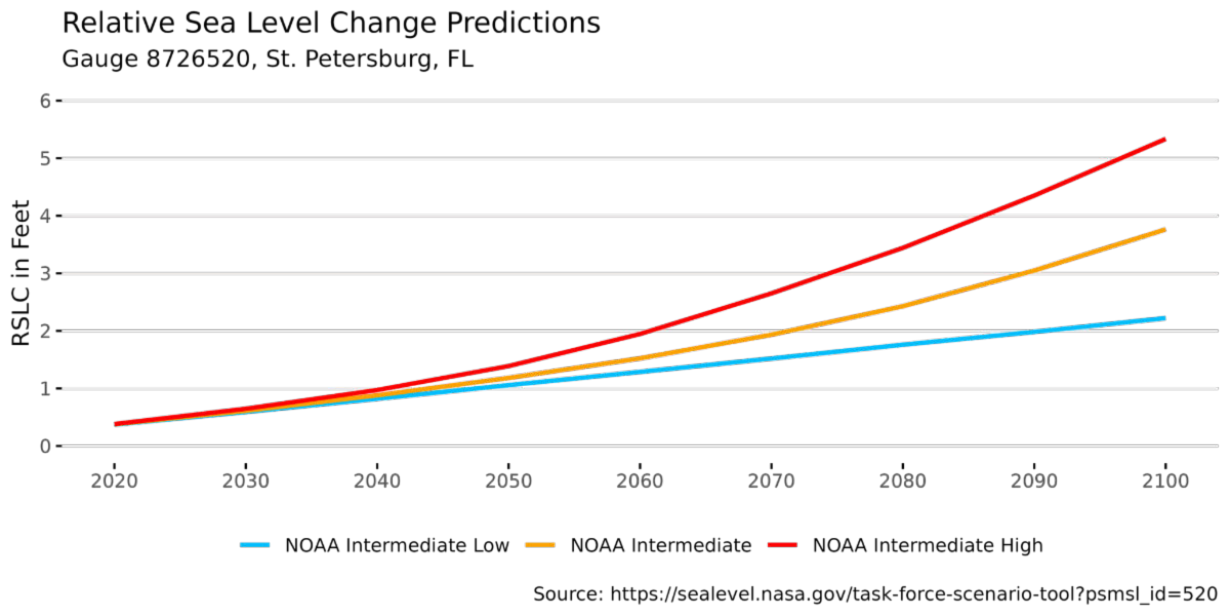
- **Emerald Harbor Homeowners Association** - Restoration of Open Space Conservation Area at Binnacle Point: Enhance the habitat of Longboat Key's Open Space/Conservation property that borders Binnacle Point Drive so that it becomes more ecologically healthy and aesthetically pleasing
- **Longboat Harbour Owners Association** - Longboat Harbour Post–Hurricane Landscape Improvement Project: Replace damaged landscape due to Hurricanes Helene and Milton with Florida–friendly native plantings
- **New College of Florida** - Bay Stewards: Engaging the Next Generation: Educate students about how scientists conduct research and apply results for sustainability/conservation, and how citizens can contribute to maintaining the bay's health
- **Oyster Boys Conservation** - Shells, Science, and Saving our Waterways: A pilot Program for Community-led Waterway Protection: Host a program on the threats and solutions to the health of local waterways, a vertical oyster garden workshop, and a feedback session to gain insights on conservation priorities
- **Oyster River Ecology** - Green Space Guardians: Facilitate one volunteer event each month between July 2025 and August 2026 for a total of 14 volunteer events lasting 3 hours each
- **Sarasota Bay Watch** - Marine Debris Cleanups for Our Coastal Waterways: Support nine waterway and underwater cleanups in Midnight Pass, Whitaker Bayou, Phillippi Creek, Jim Neville Marine Preserve perimeter, Sarasota Bayfront, Robert Bay, Dona Bay, Sister Key Perimeter, Grand Canal, and New Pass and Saprito Fishing Piers
- **UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County** - Expanding Access, Education, and Connection to the Sarasota Bay Watershed: Host an immersive youth camping and family day bus tour experience at Oscar Scherer State Park that includes service-learning projects like a trash cleanup, planting project, or invasive removal

Explore Past Grant Recipients

State and regional coalitions release updated sea level rise projections

Both the **State of Florida's Resilient Florida Program** and the **Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel** have released updates this year on what sea level rise could look like for our region (based on the St. Petersburg tide gauge). In April, the Florida Statewide Office of Resilience and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) updated their projections, adopting the NOAA Intermediate Low and Intermediate scenarios. In June, the Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel released their projections, which include the Intermediate High scenario in addition to the two scenarios adopted by the state.

What's the Difference?
The STATE recommends looking at the **Intermediate Low (blue line)** and **Intermediate (orange line)** scenarios. The TAMPA BAY CLIMATE SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL recommends looking at **all three** scenarios shown below.



Relative sea level change (RSLC) scenarios for St. Petersburg, FL, as calculated using the regionally corrected NOAA 2022 curves. Credit: Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel Recommended Projections of Sea Level Rise in the Tampa Bay Region

The difference between these recommendations in the near future is not as great compared to further out. For example, if in 2030, a municipality plans to build a new bridge with a life expectancy of 50 years:

- According to the State, they should plan for 1.1ft - 1.7ft* of sea level rise.
- According to the Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel, they should plan for 1.1ft - 2.8ft of sea level rise.

This is a difference of about a foot, which is significant and makes long-term planning a challenge.

Is One Scenario More Likely Than the Others?
This is the million-dollar question. However, there are probabilities associated with each scenario based on how likely it is that sea level rise will exceed what's predicted if temperatures rise by 3°C by 2100. Both the State of Florida and the Tampa Bay Climate Science Advisory Panel report that:

- For the **Intermediate Low (blue line)** scenario, there is an **82%** chance that sea levels will be HIGHER than what this scenario predicts.
- For the **Intermediate (orange line)** scenario, there is a **5%** chance that sea levels will be HIGHER than what this scenario predicts.
- For the **Intermediate High (red line)** scenario, there is **less than a 1%** chance that sea levels will be HIGHER than what this scenario predicts.

Main Takeaways

- State and regional agencies and organizations agree that climate change and sea level rise are happening now and will continue to happen. In fact, our area has already seen 9.6 inches of sea level rise since 1947.
- Our area will need to continue talking about these issues across broad audiences so that

we can appropriately respond and maintain the economic and quality of life benefits our coastal region provides.

Before these updated estimates were released, SBEP also shared information on **recent trends in sea level rise**, noting that the rate of sea level rise in recent years is potentially increasing to about 3 inches per decade, which is very similar to the average of the two FDEP-derived estimates, which average 2.8 inches per decade over the next 50 years.

WATCH: Adapt or Suffer: The New Climate Reality
Dr. Dave Tomasko explains the connection between climate change and water quality and reasons to be hopeful about the ability of waterways to recover from past challenges.



Events Recap

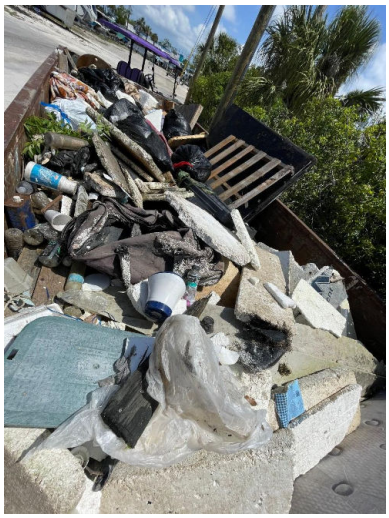
Earth Day Cleanup - Sixty volunteers and Students Taking Active Roles (STAR) students celebrated Earth Day this April by getting out onto the water and walking the coast to clean up around the Bay Park, Van Wezel, and 10th Street boat ramp. Thank you to Suncoast Waterkeeper and The Bay Park for helping make this event a success!





Bowlees Creek Cleanup - This past May, SBEP teamed up with Suncoast AquaVentures, Bahia Mar West Marina and Sara Bay Marina for a cleanup of Bowlees Creek. Roughly 47 volunteers helped remove 1920 lbs of debris – a full dumpster load!









GT Bray Park Planting – Students with Hyde Park United Methodist Church came out to GT Bray Park in June to help spruce up the recent SBEP restoration site. Together, the students, SBEP staff, and Manatee County staff installed nearly 1,000 upland meadow plants, including flowers, groundcovers, and shrubs around the stormwater pond.

World Oceans Day – SBEP joined several organizations at the Robinson Preserve Nest to celebrate World Oceans Day. Roughly 375 attendees came out to learn about our waterways and how to protect them. Activities included games like the Wildlife Olympics to help young kids learn about plants and animals that live in our watershed.





Bay Explorers Summer Experience - Big Waters Land Trust, with support from SBEP, recently wrapped up a summer camp that included field trips to restoration sites at FISH Preserve and Leffis Key. Students were able to hike, snorkel, and dipnet in different habitats and learn about restoration efforts and careers in the environmental field.





Photos by Sarah Denison Williams, Big Waters Land Trust



Farewell, Christine!

SBEP would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Christine Quigley, who served as our Public Outreach Specialist for nine years. Christine was instrumental in helping us reach, engage, and educate the community. Her passion for people and the environment has left a mark on our program, and Sarasota Bay is better because of it. We wish you all the best in your next chapter, Christine!

Spread the Word!

Suncoast Aqua Ventures Sunny Shores Cleanup July 19

There's still a lot of debris and trash left behind from the 2024 hurricanes, and cleanup is far from over. Every pair of hands makes a difference—if you can help, now's the time to pitch in. Kayaks will be available first come first serve, please register online!



City of Sarasota Neighborhood Canopy Program

City residents interested in receiving a larger tree are invited to participate in the Neighborhood

Canopy Program. This program provides professional installation of 2-inch caliper trees between the front plane of a resident's home and the street. Participants will pay $100 for the tree, with the City covering the remainder of the cost up to $500 for the selected tree, funded by the City's Tree Mitigation Fund. **Registration closes August 22**, and planting is scheduled for the first two weeks of September. Email: **NeighborhoodCanopyProgram@SarasotaFL.Gov.**



Roskamp Institute Hiring Clinical Research Assistant

The Clinical Trials Department is seeking a full-time Clinical Research Assistant to support a variety of human subject research studies. This position provides a unique opportunity to work alongside experienced investigators, research coordinators, and clinicians engaged in clinical trials targeting memory disorders, neurodegenerative diseases, brain injury, and environmentally linked health conditions. For more information, please contact Lauren Horne at lhorne@roskampinstitute.org.

Florida Master Naturalist Program – Freshwater Systems (Hybrid)

August 11 – September 8, 2025

Join the Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) and deepen your understanding of Florida's freshwater ecosystems. This 40-hour course explores Marshes, Swamps, and Permanent Wetlands through engaging classroom sessions, field experiences, and hands-on activities. Learn about freshwater ecology, wildlife, conservation issues, and the role of society in protecting these vital habitats. **Registration closes at 10:00 am on August 6.**



Lights, Camera, Action!

SBEP in the News

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



Sarasota County may again try to buy former Gulf Gate golf course for stormwater treatment
Sarasota Herald Tribune

"David Tomasko, executive director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, previously told the Herald-Tribune that the property offers an opportunity for a large-scale regional stormwater retrofit similar to one established to help clean up Hudson Bayou, and the anticipated impact on stormwater quality that the redevelopment of the Bobby Jones Golf Course in Sarasota should have."

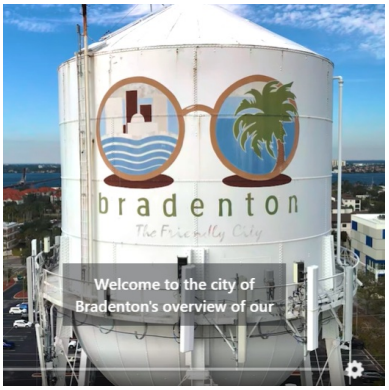


MOTE Marine Laboratory heads up seagrass initiative as other scientists call for water quality improvements
Fox 13

"Tomako said while the science of growing seagrass is vital, additional funds allocated to wastewater upgrades and storm water retrofits should be considered. 'We want both these things to happen. We want the science to move forward, but we also don't want elected officials in Tallahassee or Washington D.C. to take their eye off the ball, which is we can recover eco-system scale, but it will cost more than 10-20 million dollars,' he said."

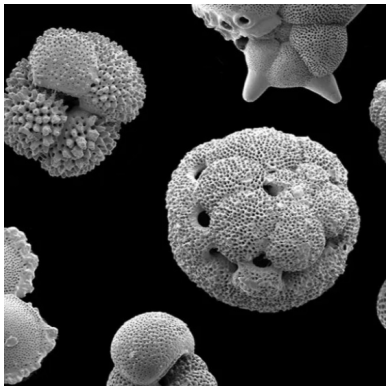
Read More SBEP in the News

Bite Sized Bay News



City of Bradenton investing in a stronger future through "Face It, Fix It" initiative

"We're actively addressing our city's infrastructure challenges head-on, improving our systems, and protecting our beautiful



The history of the ocean, as told by tiny beautiful fossils

"Bountiful remains of foraminifera reveal how organisms responded to climate disturbances of the past. They can help predict the future, too." (*Yale Climate*



Resilience to floods may be on the way to St. Armands Key

"Dubbed Resilient SRQ, the county's action plan earmarks buckets of funds for creek dredging, roadway and bridge improvements, flood

waterways for years to come. Watch **this video** to learn more about our progress!" (*City of Bradenton*)

Connections)

mitigation and other infrastructure." (*Your Observer*)

Community & Partner Events

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



Follow us

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