Seagrasses make up the majority of our habitats: turtle grass, shoal grass, and manatee grass. These three species are sometimes found mixed together within one area, but typically they compete with each other and are forced to grow in certain areas and depths.

Scientists with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) recently released the results of their 2020 seagrass mapping study showing that between 2018 and 2020, Tampa Bay has lost approximately 16% of our seagrass habitat for a total that is a 10-year low of 34,297 acres. It is believed that this could be the result of a wetter rainfall pattern that we have seen over the last couple of years that is resulting in the greater availability of nutrients in the bay which has caused some die-offs. Another cause is a greater abundance of attached algae which can be out-competing seagrass.

Seagrass has many benefits to Tampa Bay: it is a vital nursery habitat for marine animal, it helps stabilize shifting sands on the bottom of the bay; and it improves water clarity by trapping fine sediments and particles.

Documenting the extent of seagrass and how it changes overtime is a valuable tool for scientists throughout Florida as seagrasses are an important barometer of a bay’s health because they require relatively clean water to flourish, thus they are sensitive to changes in water clarity and quality.

What can you do to help?

• Consider native plants instead of grass. Ask yourself which is more important: a green lawn, or a blue Tampa Bay?
• Volunteer and/or support Tampa Bay Watch.
• Contact your elected officials at the local and state level (city council representatives, congressional representatives) and ask them to commit to stronger water quality protections, to support continued monitoring, and to fund emergency cleanup efforts.
• Follow county ordinances of summertime fertilizer bans.

Did you know...

Here in Tampa Bay, three species of seagrasses make up the majority of our habitats: turtle grass, shoal grass, and manatee grass. These three species are sometimes found mixed together within one area, but typically they compete with each other and are forced to grow in certain areas and depths.
Tampa Bay Watch is excited to announce changes to its executive leadership staff. Dwayne Virgint has been promoted to the CEO position and will be responsible for overall organizational leadership and implementation of strategic direction for Tampa Bay Watch.

As CEO, Mr. Virgint looks forward to addressing the growth and demands of the operation, as the organization has more than doubled in size over the last year.

Peter Clark will continue as president and founder of Tampa Bay Watch with a new focus on major development activities, community outreach, and bay restoration initiatives for Tampa Bay Watch. “Tampa Bay Watch has grown tremendously over time, requiring that our organization evolve in order to address the current and future demands of restoring and protecting the Tampa Bay estuary,” said Clark. “Providing operational and strategic leadership, Dwayne will be able to help take our organization to the next level, and together our goal will be to ensure its environmental and community impact for the next 100 years.”

Corporate Members Demonstrate Environmental Citizenship

Tampa Bay Watch corporate members are active partners in our efforts to protect and restore the unique Tampa Bay estuary. To become a corporate member, Email Michelle Yepez at myepez@tampabaywatch.org or call 727-867-8166, x249.

Featured Corporate Member: HH Insurance

HH Insurance is the premier provider of personal and small business insurance in Florida. HH Insurance is supporting Tampa Bay Watch by making a donation for each new policy written, and their generous partnership supports the restoration of critical lost oyster habitat in the Tampa Bay estuary.

Organizational Updates

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Current corporate members:

4th Street Family Dentistry
400 Beach Seafood & Tap House
Affinity CPA
Alden Suites
American Strategic Insurance
Amuni Financial, Inc
Argos USA LLC
ARS Wealth Advisors
Baldwin Krystyn Sherman Partners
Bloomin’ Brands
Calhoun International
Carmelita’s Rum
Catalina Marketing
COMANCO Environmental Corp
Cooper’s Hawk Winery
Copper tail Brewing Company
Courtes y Valet
Covanta
Directed Capital
Diversified Telecom Services, Inc.
The Don CeSar
Drift Local
DSK Law
Electric Supply, Inc.
Elite Watersports
FairWarning
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Florida Info Guide
Florida Pure Sea Salt
General Dynamics
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Grand Central Brewhouse
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Greenacre Properties, Inc.
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Holehouse Insurance
Honest1 Auto Care
Jabil
Kahuna’s
Kahwa Coffee
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Reef Innovations, Inc.
Resort Realty
S.A.L.T. Payroll Consultants Inc.
Sabal Trust
SaltyScales
Sand Dunes Beach Services
Saunders & Walker, P A
Southern Pension Services
Southpoint Financial Services
St. Petersburg Distillery
Sweetwater Brewing Co.
Tampa Bay Parrot Heads
Tampa Bay Pilots Association
Tampa Bay Rays
Tampa Bay Yacht Management
TECO Energy
Tennant Special Risk
TJM Properties
Tradewinds
TruGreen Commercial
Wilcox Nursery & Landscape
Wireless Time Partners
Wiss
WRB Enterprises
Xenegrade

Manatee

TRICH E CHUS MANA TUS

LENGTH: 9-10 feet | WEIGHT: up to 1,200 pounds
BEHAVIOR: Feasting on seagrass, resting, and traveling throughout the estuary.

Our staff has been delighted to see manatees recently at our Marine Education Center in Tierra Verde! The manatee’s closest relatives are the elephant and the hyrax which is a small, gopher-sized mammal. Source: savethemanatee.org and Smithsonian Magazine
Our sincerest thanks to Ryan Moralevitz, an amazing 14-year-old young man who has raised over $3,000 for Tampa Bay Watch this fall through his organization, The Fishes Wishes. Ryan said he “chose to fundraise for Tampa Bay Watch because the organization works so hard to keep our local waterways clean and thriving.” Ryan is celebrating his tenth year of helping the ocean through awareness, hands-on projects, and fundraising.

Habitat restoration projects return!

FALL VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE REOPENS

We’re excited that our habitat restoration projects are back this fall and open for volunteer registration! There are plenty of opportunities to participate through oyster reef ball construction and installation, oyster shell bar creation, native plantings, cleanups, and more. Visit tampabaywatch.org to sign up to help us restore the bay!
**OUR MISSION:**
Tampa Bay Watch is dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Tampa Bay estuary through scientific and educational programs.

**M.V. Discovery is officially christened!**
NEW ECO-TOUR VESSEL UP AND RUNNING AT THE ST. PETE PIER

Our generous sponsors, board members, and staff recently christened the **M.V. Discovery**, our new 45-foot USCG-certified catamaran at the St. Pete Pier!

This eco-vessel provides on-the-water family-friendly public eco-tours and school field trips every day, four times a day, seven days a week.

Eco-tours explore Tampa Bay history and the marine life to be found in and above the bay.

Activities include a fisheries trawl, bird spotting and identifying specific traits, and dolphin and manatee identification and behaviors, all while enjoying a relaxing bay cruise.

Visit the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center at the St. Pete Pier to book your tickets, or visit **tbwdiscoverycenter.org**.