



TAMPA BAY WATCH CELEBRATES 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY, FEB. 16

Tampa Bay Watch launches year-long initiatives to celebrate 30 years of success

St. Petersburg, Fla. (Jan. 30, 2023) — [Tampa Bay Watch](#) celebrates its 30-year anniversary on February 16, kicking off a year full of community events and fresh initiatives to honor the organization's tremendous success at safeguarding the bay's fragile ecosystem over the last three decades.

Tampa Bay Watch was established as a nonprofit organization in 1993 with the goal of fostering a healthier Tampa Bay watershed through community-driven restoration projects, education programs and outreach initiatives. Since then, the organization has grown exponentially and crossed several milestones. Some projects, such as the Oyster Shell Project, which started in 1998, continue to engage thousands of volunteers each year and provide multiple benefits to the bay. The goal of this project is to restore lost habitat by promoting new oyster growth, ultimately improving water quality and providing food sources and habitat for many species.

In 2005, Tampa Bay Watch dedicated its Tampa Bay Watch Marine Education Center, clearing a path for Estuary EDventures field trips and summer camps to begin. The program has educated over 45,000 students and teachers from over 150 schools have participated in field experiences. In 2020 the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center opened its doors on the bustling St. Pete Pier, informing and inspiring visitors about the recovery of Tampa Bay. In 2021, the Discovery Center launched an eco-vessel, a unique experience for community members to learn from marine science experts while exploring the sparkling waters of Tampa Bay.

Since its inception, Tampa Bay Watch's team and volunteers have installed over 17,000 oyster reef balls – a project that has restored marine habitat, improved water quality and prevented erosion along the edges of Tampa Bay. The organization has also created 111,038 square feet of oyster reef by installing thousands of tons of shell. Their longest-term restoration project is at MacDill Air Force Base where the installation is so significant that it can be seen from Google Earth. This ongoing project currently consists of 9,700 Oyster Reef Balls and 450 tons of oyster shell reef. The partnership began in 2004 and has developed living shoreline techniques that endure huge vessel wakes from transport ships entering and leaving Port Tampa. Other notable achievements to date include the recovery of over 4,000 miles of fishing line and over 2,000 derelict crab traps.

As part of its anniversary, Tampa Bay Watch plans to celebrate the partners, donors and volunteers that have helped achieve such success over the past 30 years and set ambitious goals to continue to protect and restore the bay for the years to come. An anonymous donor will match up to \$10,000 for the 30th anniversary celebration campaign. One new initiative which will be implemented is a Citizen Science program as a way for volunteers of all skill levels and abilities to participate in scientific research and get involved with habitat restoration efforts.

Community members are invited to join Tampa Bay Watch staff at 3 Daughters Brewing on the organization's anniversary to say "Cheers to 30 years!" The celebration runs from 5-8 p.m. and is located at 222 22nd St S, St. Petersburg, FL 33712. For more information, visit <http://tampabaywatch.org/events/cheers-and-beers/>

###

About Tampa Bay Watch

Founded in 1993, **Tampa Bay Watch** is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization dedicated exclusively to the stewardship and restoration of the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary encompassing over 400 square miles of open water and 2,300 square miles of highly developed watershed. Tampa Bay Watch involves more than 10,000 youth and adult volunteers each year in hands-on habitat restoration projects. For more information, visit www.tampabaywatch.org, or call 727-867-8166.

Media Contacts

Alex Hurley, ahurley@paradiseadv.com

Audrey Woods, awoods@paradiseadv.com