



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Return of Scallops to Sarasota Bay Reflection of Improved Water Quality Visit SBEP booth at Cortez Commercial Fishing Festival for full story

Sarasota, FL - In July of 2007 it was members of the Sarasota Bay Buddies and Boys and Girls Clubs of Manatee County that first discovered the return of scallops in Sarasota Bay during a routine cleanup effort near Emerson Point. While cleaning up the shoreline at the mouth of the Manatee River they discovered many scallops while snorkeling. What began as a cleanup soon turned into a significant finding for area researchers and scientists who said it was the largest population of scallops found in this region in the last 25 years.

Scallops are the “gold standard” for water quality in southwest Florida. That is why a scallop shell is featured in the logo of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program. The fact that scallops have returned to the Bay is a good sign. In 2008 and 2009 - through the efforts of volunteer-based scallop searches in Sarasota Bay- more scallops were found than at any other time in the past fifty years!

Another indicator of the improved water quality in Sarasota Bay is the gain in seagrass coverage. From a historical perspective, seagrass coverage decreased by 15-percent between 1950 and 1988, mainly as a result of poor water clarity and dredge-and-fill operations. Today, however, seagrasses have recovered to the point that seagrass coverage is at 130-percent of 1950 acreage.

The Gulf of Mexico Program recently awarded the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Interlocal Partners and Citizens a first place Gulf Guardian Award for 2009 in the Partnership Category for the seagrass recovery. Seagrass recovery is a major element of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program’s Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Sarasota Bay. To view the Gulf Guardian Award video visit <http://www.sarasotabay.org/mediacenter.html>.

Don’t forget to visit the SBEP booth in the community center during the Cortez Fishing Festival, Saturday and Sunday, February 20th and 21st and learn more about the return of scallops to Sarasota Bay and other exciting projects.

For more information please contact the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program at 941-955-8085 or visit www.sarasotabay.org.

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset—Sarasota Bay. Its unique program strives to improve water quality, increase habitat and enhance the natural resources of the area for use and enjoyment by the public. Sarasota Bay is one of 28 estuaries in the United States that have been named by the U.S. Congress as an "estuary of national significance."

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