

Manatee Awareness Month ends with grim statistics



West Indian Manatee (WCTV)

By ABC7 Staff

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SARASOTA, Fla. (WWSB) - Tuesday is the last day of Manatee Awareness Month and the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program says the statistics are startling.

As of this month, the program says Florida has lost over 1,000 manatees, more than 10% of the statewide population, and nearly twice the number of manatees that typically die each year.

The epicenter of this extraordinarily bad year for manatees is the Indian River Lagoon, where many of the animals are starving to death in massive numbers as their seagrass food resources dwindle due to poor water quality.

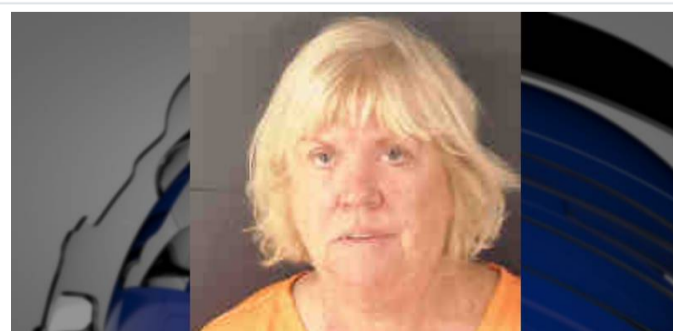
The Sarasota Bay Estuary program does say they are optimistic in a return to a healthier Sarasota Bay.

"Over the past year, we have developed a preliminary nutrient pollution reduction target to get us back to where we need to be for a healthier bay with better water quality, less algae, and more seagrass. Just this month, our local governments have committed to spending approximately \$600 million on wastewater upgrades and stormwater retrofits over the next 5 to 10 years. These investments will go a long way toward achieving the preliminary 20% nutrient load reduction target that we believe is necessary to get the bay back on track," reads a release from the group.

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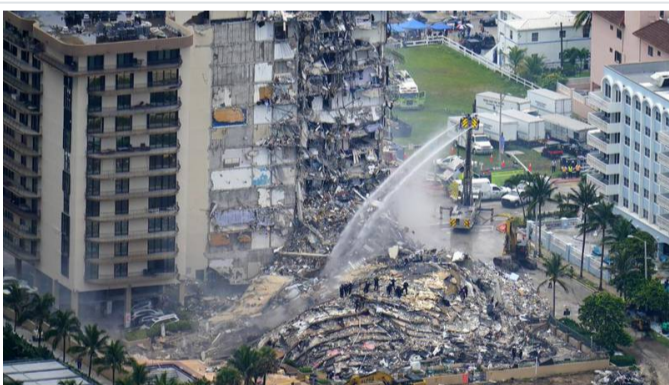
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