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**RED TIDE**

## Humans impact red tide intensity, new study finds

by: [Allyson Henning](#)

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SARASOTA COUNTY (WFLA) – Over the last several years, the Tampa Bay region has seen a number of [red tide blooms](#), some [more intense and longer-lasting than others](#).

Researchers from the University of Florida, the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation and the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program recently co-authored a peer-reviewed article in the journal

Science of the Total Environment. The study found human activity impacted the intensity of red tide blooms in southwest Florida.

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Dr. David Tomasko, the director of SBEP, points out the [study confirms](#) what a number of local fisherman and charter captains have suspected for years.

“We looked at red tide data for 10 years and then compared it with nutrient data and flow data from the Caloosahatchee River and what we found is that humans don’t cause red tide to occur in those areas off of Sanibel and Captiva, but when there’s a nutrient load coming down there, it makes red tide worse,” Dr. Tomasko explained. “Humans don’t cause red tide, but we can cause them to be more intense which means they can last longer, cover larger areas and be more intense — more red tide organisms makes it more lethal to fish.”

Sarasota Captain Fred Means told 8 On Your Side he feels the state needs to make changes.

“We need to do better. As far as I know, red tide is a naturally-occurring thing. We are just making it way worse though, so we need to stop that,” Capt. Means said.

The captain has worked in the Sarasota area for the last eight years and has experienced [two bad, lengthy blooms](#) that [devastated business](#).

“The 2018 one was the worst. That one lasted a long time, probably almost until Thanksgiving. Last year was pretty bad though too. I’m just praying it doesn’t come back this year,” he said.

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Dr. Tomasko said [what happened in Tampa Bay last year](#) is a good example of what the study found further south.

“That red tide where it occurred in the area east of the Sunshine Skyway was the worst red tide in 50 years and it [just wasn’t a coincidence](#) that it happened [a couple of months after](#)

Piney Point,” Dr. Tomasko said. “Piney Point loaded 80,000 bags of fertilizer into Tampa Bay and that part of Tampa Bay had the worst red tide in 50 years. That is kind of a good example of when you add nutrients in to a water body where there is red tide, and there was red tide at low abundances, it just blew up.”

SBEP’s director says elected officials have been alerted to the results of the study.

“If you want to get harmful algal blooms under control, you’ve got to get your nutrient loads under control,” said Dr. Tomasko.

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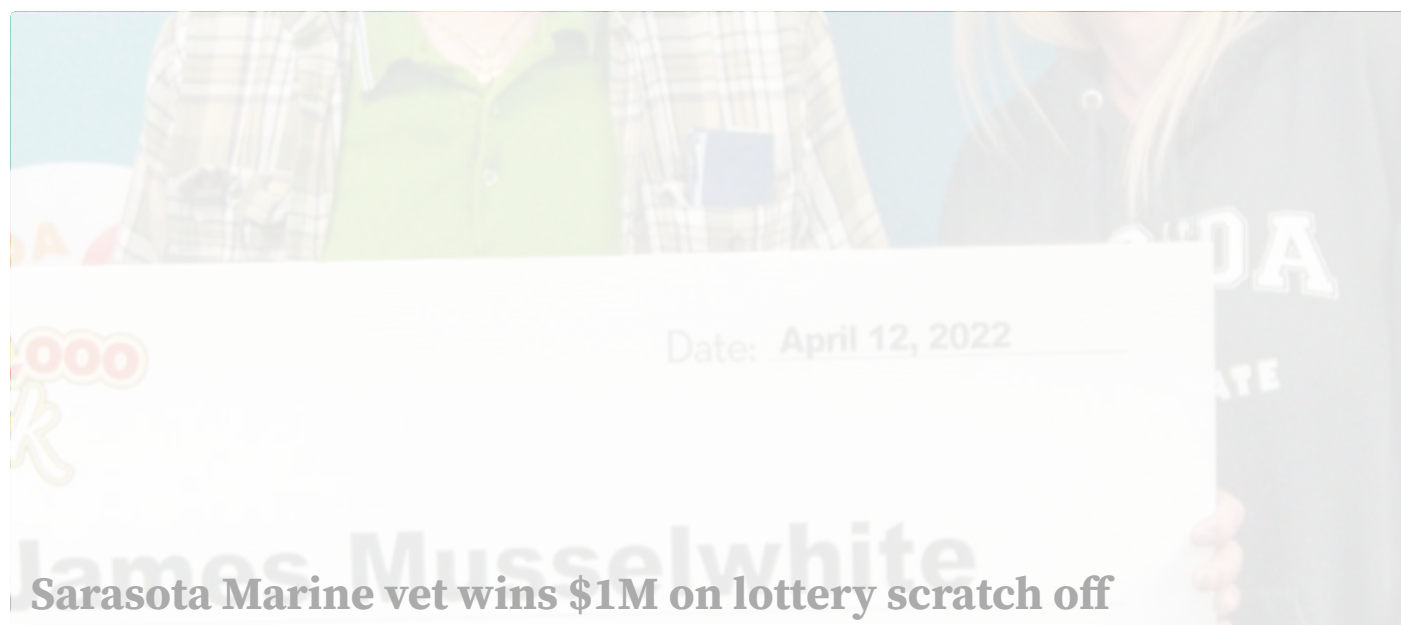
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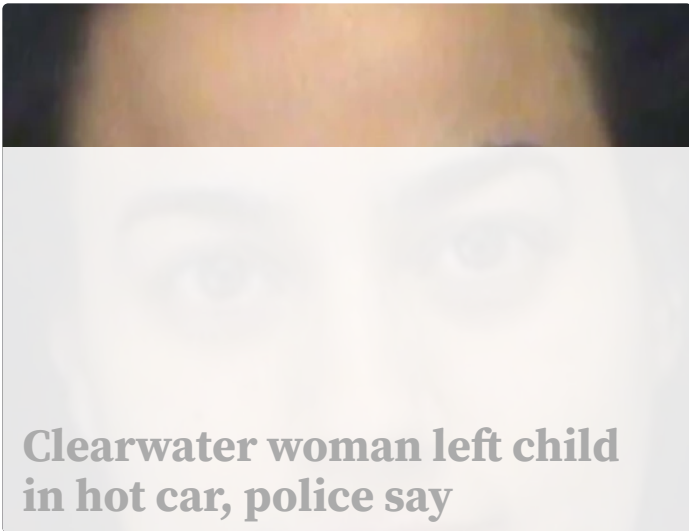




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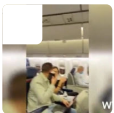
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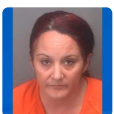
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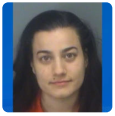




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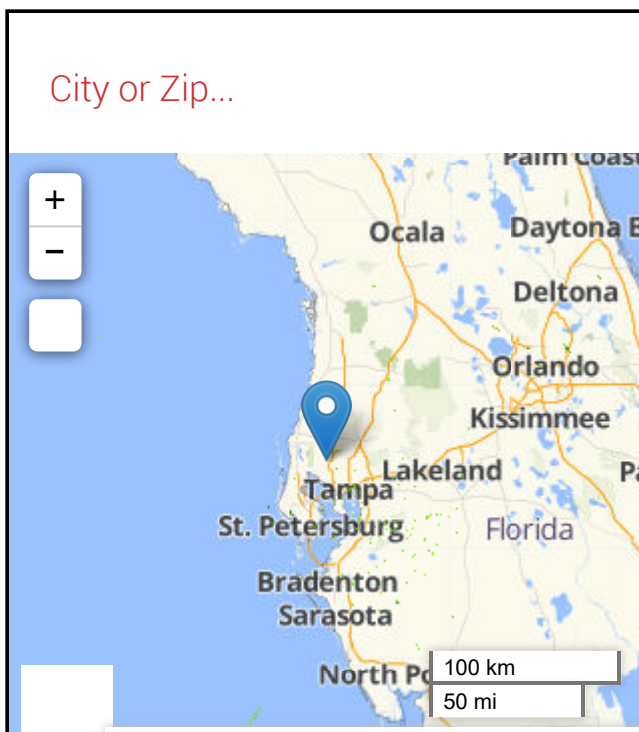
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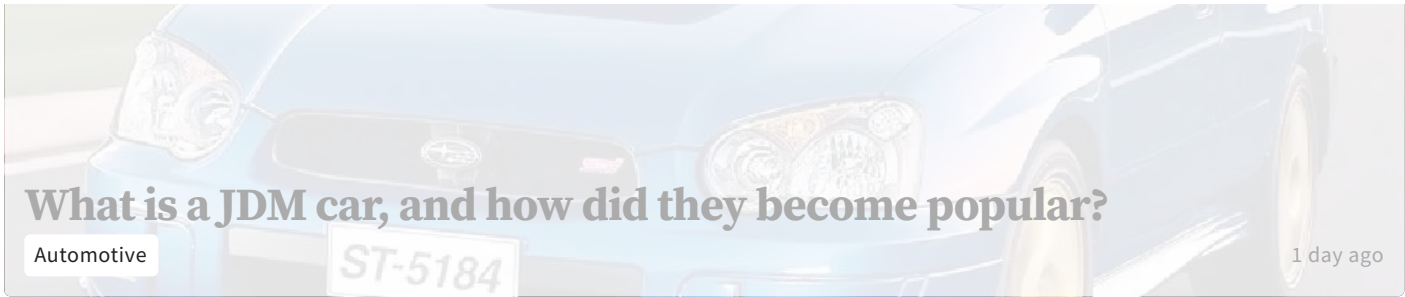
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