

Environmental group releases plan to protect Sarasota Bay

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Keeping the bay healthy

Kimberly Kuizon reports

SARASOTA, Fla. - The [Sarasota](#) Bay Estuary Program is working to make sure the waterway stays healthy.

"It's important to our water quality and our Florida wildlife heritage. This is a plan that actually is meant to make sure that people understand what needs to happen over the next couple of years and the next couple of decades," stated Dr. David Tomasko, director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

The group recently released a Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan. It's almost a step-by-step guide on what needs to be done.

The plan includes stormwater runoff and wastewater improvements, habitat restoration and getting the community to join in.

"The health of the bay was recovered in the early 1990s and then it kind of slipped away from us because we weren't paying enough attention about the things we need to do about stormwater and wastewater. Our population grew, our infrastructure got old," explained Dr. Tomasko.

Sarasota Bay has faced red tide, large nutrient dumps and new construction. Dr. Tomasko wants to make sure the past is not repeated.

READ: Five years after red tide devastated sea trout in Sarasota Bay, efforts to replenish begin

"Our bay is important to our quality of life here. There are tens of thousands of people that go out on boats on the weekend. It's important to our economy there are about 20,000 jobs associated with bay-related activities," he explained.

All of that can continue as long as the community works together to protect one of our most important assets.

"In the last 18 months, we've lost about 1/3 of the manatee population on the East Coast of Florida. If we don't want that to happen here and they die basically because of starvation, then we have to do a better job and this is the way to figure out how to do that better job," he said.

LINK: For more information visit, www.sarasotabay.org/our-plan.

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