

ENVIRONMENT

New report reveals humans contribute to red tide

Researchers at the University of Florida conducted a study and their findings reveal that humans are linked to making red tide blooms worse.



Author: Shannon Clowe (WTSP)
 Published: 12:26 PM EDT September 9, 2022
 Updated: 5:54 PM EDT September 9, 2022



SARASOTA, Fla. — The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's current [red tide map](#) shows there is no red tide detected statewide.

Researchers explained that if we want to see this continue, we need to change our actions.

"There are these two schools of thought. One of them is, humans have nothing to do with red tide because the conquistadors talk about it and the next is well, red tide is algal blooms, it has to be due to humans. The reality is, it's between the two," said Dave Tomasko, the executive director for the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

[A new report from the University of Florida](#) shows humans are linked to making red tide worse.

"The worst thing that we can do is add a lot of nutrients to our waters," Tomasko said.

The study focuses on the Caloosahatchee River in Southwest Florida. That river has experienced severe algal blooms in the past.

Scientists at the University of Florida looked at red tide blooms near Charlotte Harbor. They found that nutrient-enriched discharges from the Caloosahatchee River intensified *Karenia*



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brevis — the species that causes red tide. Scientists also found nitrogen inputs in the water that contribute to red tide.

Tomasko explained people are adding nitrogen into our water every day.

"If you want to make red tide worse, we're doing a great job because we are loading the water with nitrogen, which is the nutrients they need," Tomasko said.

Tomasko explained people need to pick up after their pets, not toss those grass clippings in the street and pay attention to how much and when they're using fertilizer.

"Our estimates are we are loading two to three times as much nitrogen into the water compared to when no one lived here," Tomasko explained.

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It's not just people, but our city and county leaders can help, too.

Tomasko said Sarasota Bay is improving in water quality because leaders are spending \$900 million over the next five years on wastewater infrastructure.

Tomasko explained the money comes from five local governments. Manatee County, Sarasota County, Bradenton, Sarasota, and Longboat Key contributed the money to spend over the next five to 10 years. There will be upgrades to wastewater treatment plants, stormwater retrofits, plus repairing wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

"It's not getting better by chance, it's getting better because we are spending huge amounts of money to fix our wastewater infrastructure to reduce our stormwater loads," Tomasko said.

Tomasko believes those in Tampa Bay need to change their actions.

"The city of Tampa does a great job with treating its wastewater, but most of it is still discharged into the bay every day," Tomasko added.

Ultimately, repairing and fixing storm and wastewater infrastructure will help, but it's expensive.

"It's solvable, but it cost a lot of money," he said.

Bay area cities prepare for heavy rain, potential flooding





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Harmful blue-green algal toxins detected at Three Sisters Springs

The Florida Department of Health in Citrus County says visitors should not drink, swim or wade in the waters when there is a bloom.

The number of manatees at Three Sisters Springs has increased dramatically in the past 5 years from an average cold day of about 65 manatees to 528 on Sunday.

Author: Jordan Highsmith

Published: 11:02 PM EDT September 2, 2022

Updated: 11:02 PM EDT September 2, 2022



LECANTO, Fla. — Planning on checking out the clear blue waters of Three Sisters Springs anytime soon? The [Florida Department of Health in Citrus County](#) is advising visitors to take precautions in a certain area.

The Department of Health detected the presence of harmful blue-green algal toxins in the Three Sisters Springs canal between 3rd Avenue and 4th Avenue in Lecanto, Florida. The samples were taken on Sept. 1.

"The public should exercise caution in and around Three Sisters Springs," the Florida Department of Health in Citrus County said in a news release.

Residents and visitors near the area are advised to not drink, swim or wade where there is a visible bloom.

Blue-green algae blooms can be harmful to ecosystems and people, including fish and aquatic animals, FDOH says.

Below are agencies to contact if you or someone else comes across blue-green algae and an animal gets contaminated.

- To report a bloom to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, call 1-800-636-0511
- To report fish kills, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute at 1-800-636-0511
- If you are experiencing symptoms from exposure to a harmful algal bloom or any aquatic toxin, contact the Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222 and speak with a poison specialist immediately
- If your pet has become ill after being contaminated or has consumed blue-green algae water, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- For any health questions or concerns about blue-green algae blooms, call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at 813-307-8000

To learn more about the potential health effects of algal blooms, [click here](#).

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