

# New reports show that seagrass is on the decline in Tampa Bay and Sarasota Bay

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**SARASOTA, Fla.** - What scientists are finding under the waters of local bays is raising new concerns about the environment. A new report shows that over the past several years more than 50 percent of the seagrass has been lost in some areas.

Scientists say seagrass is an indicator of the overall health of the bay, the water quality, and the habitat for fish, manatees and other wildlife.

The new report from the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Seagrass Mapping program shows significant loss of seagrass in parts of both Tampa Bay and Sarasota Bay.

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Those areas appeared to be gaining seagrass in the past.

"In 2016 to 2018 we had the most seagrass. We had more than we had in 1950," says Tom Ries of Ecosphere Restoration Institute. "But with continued development there's more nutrients coming in. We've had storms, really wet years. Those factors will affect it."

Dave Tomasko, director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program says action needs to be taken to stop the decline.

"I don't think we have 5 to 10 years to study and figure out what we need to do," says Tomasko. "It's pretty clear we need to do more with wastewater and stormwater treatment."

The report shows the worst declines in the northern parts of Tampa Bay, including a 51 percent decline in Hillsborough Bay, 37 percent in Old Tampa Bay, and 26 percent in Sarasota Bay.

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