

# Vinyl seawalls could be negatively affecting bay's water quality



WWSB ABC7 News at 6pm

By [Jordan Litwiller](#)

Published: Jul. 26, 2023 at 6:43 PM EDT | Updated: 16 hours ago



SARASOTA, Fla. (WWSB) - The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program surveyed 32 different seawalls throughout the bay, 16 of which were concrete and the other 16 were plastic or vinyl.

"There were sections of seawall that looked different than what we were used to seeing," says program director David Tomasko.

Tomasko says they found a stark difference between oyster growth on the two surfaces.

"The sixteen that were concrete, there were oysters, and a lot of them. You could see them sticking out a couple inches. But on the plastic seawalls, 10 of the 16 didn't have any oysters whatsoever," Tomasko says, adding this has a big effect on the bay's ecosystem.

"We're losing a lot of the filter feeding and water filtration of our bay by putting in these new types of seawalls everywhere," says Tomasko.

One solution the team is working on is installing what they call mangrove panels.

"They are made of concrete, and you can apply them to the face of a vinyl seawall and recover that lost oyster habitat," says Sarasota Bay Estuary Program scientist Jay Leverone.

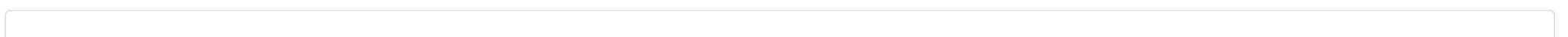
This gives oysters the chance to attach to the concrete that covers the vinyl surface, while still allowing homeowners to save money.

"We think this is a win-win situation. People can install their new seawalls. We aren't going back to concrete seawalls. You can put these mangrove panels on the front of your seawall, thereby enriching the biological community, providing oyster habitat and improving water quality," says Leverone.

SBEP hopes to start installing these vinyl seawalls at Bay Front Park on Longboat Key this fall or early next year.

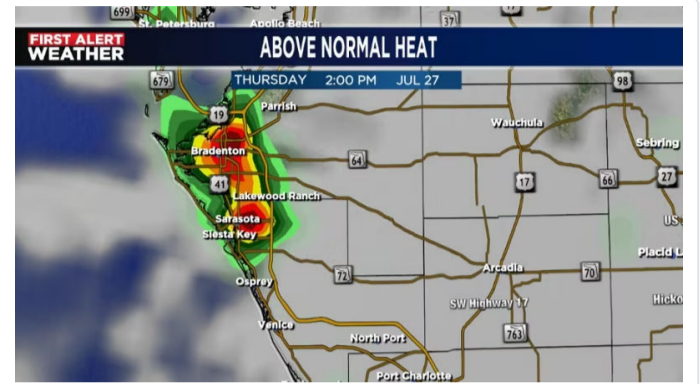
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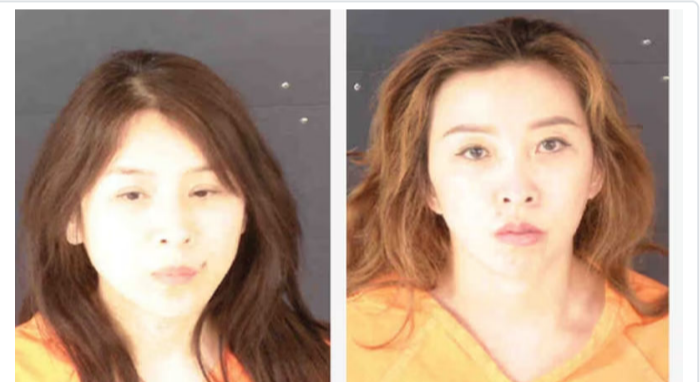
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