

Higher water temperatures causing fish kills along Palma Sola Causeway, Little Sarasota Bay

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Hotter Bay Area waterways leads to fish kills

Kimberly Kuizon reports

BRADENTON, Fla. - As temperatures outside have heated up, so have waters the Tampa Bay area. Scientists said that warmer waters mixed with higher salin can cause oxygen levels to drop, which can lead to fish kills.

Researchers said it's happening along the Palma Sola Causeway and Little Sarasota Bay, and it could continue if the higher temperatures persist.

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Along the shoreline of the Palma Sola Causeway in [Manatee County](#), Dr. David Tomasko, the director of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, has spotted dead and crabs washing ashore.

Red tide isn't present right now. In fact, the latest Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) maps show red tide is not present the state.

Dr. Tomasko said that marine life is dying due to very low oxygen levels in the water.

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"If the highest you can be is four, and you have enough life to drop the oxygen down like two or three milligrams per liter, then you will have a fish kill, and it looks like that's what we have," he said. "The last reading that we've had for oxygen in this system during that last fish kill was less than one milligram per liter and that's certainly low enough to cause a fish kill."

Dr. Tomasko said the historically high temperatures are part of the problem. Along the causeway, the water temperature remains in the low 90s.

"Warm water can't hold very much oxygen and salty water can't hold very much oxygen," he said. "What we have is very warm and very salty water and the combination of those two means about the highest level of oxygen we can have about four milligrams per liter."

Dr. Tomasko said it's up to the community to protect our waterways and try to come up with a solution.

"Our water has been getting warmer for 50 years in Sarasota Bay, Gulf of Mexico for about the same amount of time. If we aren't going to address the issues of why the water is warmer, then we will have to address the thing we can do is nutrients," said Dr. Tomasko.

Researchers at the University of Florida are also studying how low and warmer waters are impacting coral reefs. We've seen a rush

from bleaching and dying this summer.

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