



## **Biscayne Bay Water Watch Profile**

The International SeaKeepers Society teamed up with the UF/IFAS (University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) Sea Grant Extension Program in Miami-Dade County to conduct water quality testing. This was a part of the Biscayne Bay Water Watch (BBWW) program, a citizen-science based volunteer water quality monitoring study which consists of participants collecting data concerning different parameters of the bay.

Biscayne Bay is a subtropical estuary that extends approximately 55 miles along the entire east coast of Miami-Dade County. Compared to other Florida waters, Biscayne Bay is characterized by very low concentrations of nutrients and pollutants and has excellent water clarity. These conditions support extensive seagrass habitat, hard-bottom communities, soft and hard corals, economically-vital fisheries populations, and a variety of endangered and threatened species. The ecosystem in Biscayne Bay contributes about 10 percent to the Miami-Dade economy each year. Activities related to Biscayne Bay generate \$12.7 billion in economic output, \$6.3 billion in incomes 138,000 jobs, and \$627 million in tax revenue to the local economy annually. Over the past decade several algal blooms have threatened the quality, health and beauty of the Bay, impacting its marine life and over 10,000 acres of bay bottom habitat. These events suggest that the Bay may be experiencing a reduction in resiliency to withstand such events, which can be caused by both natural and human factors – this can lead to significant consequences for the Biscayne Bay ecosystem, economic consequences for the local fishing and tourism, in addition to reducing the beauty, usability, and enjoyment that the Bay provides for South Florida residents.

The goal of BBWW is to garner attention to the health of Biscayne Bay and promote awareness about the importance of water quality on our local environment and economy. Additionally, BBWW was organized in an effort to supplement the water quality monitoring efforts by DERM and SFWMD and to fill in any gaps that exist in County's current water quality network. Volunteers consist of partner organizations and private citizens. Volunteers sample their "adopted" sites monthly, and are trained in the collection of samples for temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, and chlorophyll. The data collected will help to: identify emergent or existing algal blooms, identify changes and trends in water quality over time, and be reviewed to help assess the health and status of Biscayne Bay.

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