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NEWSROOM

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MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

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Red tide bloom affects southern Sarasota County

State and local officials from Mote Marine Laboratory and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) have identified a bloom of red tide algae. It appears to stretch from inshore southern Sarasota County to offshore Collier County. It is centered off Charlotte Harbor, stretching southeast toward Collier, according to satellite images provided by the University of South Florida.

"We saw an obvious patch of the *Karenia brevis* bloom near Charlotte Harbor on Sept. 30 during a flight with the volunteer-led organization LightHawk," said Alina Corcoran of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI). FWRI confirmed low to medium concentrations of the red tide algae in samples collected alongshore of Charlotte County. The Mote Beach Conditions Report System, which covers 26 beaches along the Gulf Coast, including Sarasota County, has received reports of respiratory irritation and dead fish from beaches in southern Sarasota County.

Mote will be collecting additional water samples from the bloom over the next couple of days as part of the joint Mote-FWRI red tide response strategy.

Local officials say people can still enjoy the beaches but should be aware that red tide is present in coastal waters. "We are reminding people that respiratory irritation is possible, similar to a cold or hay fever," said Sarasota County Health Department Environmental Health Administrator Tom Higginbotham. "People with asthma or chronic respiratory impairments need to be especially mindful of beach conditions where red tide impacts are being reported. For those who are susceptible, symptoms associated with red tide tend to become more noticeable when the winds are blowing on-shore, which is forecast for the next few days."

"It's important to note that winds can change quickly," said Kate Nierenberg, Mote senior biologist who coordinates the beach conditions report. "The Mote Marine Laboratory's Beach Conditions Report, which is updated at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., allows the public to be equipped with current information when planning their visits to the beach."

Sarasota County maintenance crews are scheduled to remove dead fish from Blind Pass Beach, 6725 Manasota Key Road, on Thursday and from Manasota Key and Manasota Beach, 8570 Manasota Key Road, Manasota Key, on Friday. Sarasota County lifeguards and other staff will continue to monitor beach conditions and respond appropriately.

Reports are displayed online at www.mote.org/beaches, where residents and visitors can register to receive reports about specific beaches by email. For telephone updates, call 941-BEACHES and press 1 for Sarasota County beaches. To report fish kills, citizens can call FWRI's Fish Kill Hotline at 800-636-0511 (toll-free). Statewide red tide status reports are provided by FWRI on Wednesdays and Fridays at <http://myfwc.com/research/redtide/events/status/>.

Officials continue to monitor the waters and beaches. Residents and visitors can stay apprised about the red tide organism in area recreational waters by using the resources listed below.

Resource information about red tide:

- Sarasota County beach conditions: www.mote.org/beaches or call 941-BEACHES. Press 1 for Sarasota County.
- For biweekly red tide monitoring reports from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission: <http://myfwc.com/research/redtide/events/status/statewide/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/hab/default.htm>
- Florida Department of Health: <http://www.myfloridaeh.com/medicine/aquatic/index.html>
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: <http://www.floridaaquaculture.com/RedTide/RedTideInfo.htm>
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/hab/>
- Health-related information/reporting of illnesses from exposure to red tide: call toll-free 24/7 Florida Poison Control Information Center at **1-800-222-1222**.