

BISCAYNE BAY REGIONAL RESTORATION AND COORDINATION TEAM

REPORT TO THE WORKING GROUP

MARCH 2014

Over the course of the last six months, the BBRRCT has had presentations and discussions about algal blooms in Biscayne Bay, and is the primary portion of this latest Report to the Working Group.

ALGAL BLOOMS ON BISCAYNE BAY

In general, although Biscayne Bay remains relatively health in terms of water quality and nutrient content, it receives occasional inputs that can negatively impact water quality and benthic resources. Healthy and resilient ecosystems may show periods of disruption from these events, but are able to withstand them without long-term consequences.

Three significant events, unprecedented in their scale or duration, have occurred in Biscayne Bay over the past decade, and may indicate a diminished ability by the Bay to handle such inputs. These events were:

- 1) A phytoplankton bloom that started in 2005 in Barnes and Card Sounds and Manatee Bay (located in the southern end of Biscayne Bay) which persisted for (3) years. This event caused the loss of sea grass and benthic organisms within the region of the bloom.
- 2) A green macro-algal bloom initiated in 2004 and continues (though diminished) today. The impacted area runs along the western shore south

of Rickenbacker Causeway to south of Coral Gables and out to mid-Bay. This bloom has impacted over 7,500 acres of the bay bottom, including loss of sea grass and benthic organisms.

- 3) A phytoplankton bloom occurred in the summer of 2013 across the northern region of the Bay.

These events may indicate that Biscayne Bay is showing a decreased capacity to withstand unusual events and inputs, whether natural or human related.

These warning signs emphasize the importance of maintaining vigilance in assessment and monitoring of conditions of Biscayne Bay. It is essential to keep in mind that the existing database only has relevance if there is recent and ongoing data with which to determine what specific characteristics of the system are changing, and in turn to assist in determining and understanding how these changes may affect the Bay and its long-term health and sustainability.

CREATION OF NEW SUB-TEAMS

In addition, the BBRRCT recently supported the Chair's initiative to create new Sub-Teams to better track the various issues and projects that impact Biscayne Bay and in turn to become a more valuable resource for the Bay and the Working Group.

Per the BBRRCT Charter: "The Chair shall have the power to create and change Standing and/or single purpose subcommittees."

The BBRRCT recently approved the creation of the following Subcommittees (referred to as "Sub-Teams):

COORDINATION SUB-TEAM: Focus on improving 1) coordination between agencies and 2) improve interaction between Bay stakeholders and policy-making agencies

EDUCATION/COMMUNICATION SUB-TEAM: Add new task of communication to an already existing EDUCATION SUB-TEAM

STAKEHOLDERS SUB-TEAM: Made up of private sector members and others – such as various Bay users including Boaters; other sport, recreational, and commercial users; commercial and recreational fishermen; tourism and tourists; and other uses creating positive economic impact

ECONOMIC IMPACT SUB-TEAM: Focus on creating better links to the business community and to better explain and explore the linkages between good science and better economic benefits and value

MEMBERSHIP SUB-TEAM: Primary task is to update and fill out the identified Team Member slots and to improve attendance and participation and the value of the BBRRCT

BBRRCT SUPPORT SUB-TEAM: Help identify sources of funding for critical science/monitoring studies; reviews and updates of the economic impact of Biscayne Bay; broader and improved educational outreach

These (6) new Sub-Teams will be in addition to (2) previously established Sub-teams:

ACTION ITEM SUB-TEAM: Perform annual and/or bi-annual review of BBRRCT

Action Items and update existing or develop new Action
Items as deemed most appropriate

AGENDA SUB-TEAM: Develop Agendas for monthly BBRRCT meetings

The Chair's first task for these new Sub-Teams is to identify several key issues in their purview relating to Biscayne Bay and then focusing on these key issues to develop new Action Items for the BBRRCT that can be accomplished or acted upon in a meaningful way within a one or two-year period.

The existing Action Items should be viewed as **Overarching Action Items** that are more general and long-term in nature.