

New Pass Fishing Pier Underwater Cleanup is a Big Success



Sarasota Bay Watch hosted a cleanup on Saturday June 3, 2017 at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota and pulled a surprising amount of debris up from the bottom of New Pass. By far the most abundant waste was cast nets coming in at a total of 47! The City of Sarasota Police Dive Team was an especially valuable partner because they not only provided expert SCUBA divers but also patrolled the area in their boats and kept the divers safe from passing boats. Other partners included the Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Marina Jacks, NAUI Green Diver, Scuba Quest dive shop, the City of Sarasota Sustainability Program, Reelcycle, and Aqua Lung.



In about two hours, 35 scuba divers scoured a 500-foot long area of the bay bottom near the seawall. The found trash and brought it to the surface where they handed it off to people in kayaks, canoes or jet skis. The 8 paddlers brought it to shore where a group of 24 “topsiders” diligently returned any tangled up living things back to the water. Some of the sea life they rescued were brittle stars, sea squirts, crabs, shrimp, coral, fish and even an octopus. Next, the waste was cut up, measured and weighed. Plastic fishing line was picked up by Reelcycle, a nonprofit leader in managing fishing tackle disposal. The data from these cleanups is shared with NOAA and other leaders in the marine debris issue.



Some of the more interesting things that were found included several rods and reels, lures, 9 knives, a hand truck, a gas meter and a machete. Over 330 pounds of lead weights were brought up – mostly from cast nets but also some sinkers. It's also notable what was not found – very few plastic bottles, plastic bags or aluminum cans. Divers reported seeing snook, stone crabs and a lobster. Two fish were found still attached to tangled fishing line – the hooks were removed from their mouths and the fish swam away. Special thanks go to the Sarasota Sailing Squadron and Marina Jacks who provided small floating docks to make a safe and easy access for divers. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and air to completely clean this stretch of the bay. There were other nets and waste that remained in the bay to be cleaned up another day.



It was a fun morning spent among friends – working together to make our bay a little healthier.



