Sarasota County Seagrass Survey 2015

In 2015, Sarasota County conducted field surveys of seagrass in coastal bays. 160 locations were surveyed between January 28, 2015 and March 6, 2015. Data was recorded for presence or absence of seagrass, species type, species percentage, seagrass coverage, drift algae coverage, epiphyte coverage, attached algae type, attached algae species, sediment type, seagrass blade length by species, and other biology observed. The survey selectively samples in locations where seagrass will probably be found, based on aerial surveys. Locations presumed to have no seagrass were generally not sampled.

- Seagrass was found at 69% of the locations surveyed
- Seagrass meadows covered 45% of the bay floor, on average, for locations sampled
- Maximum seagrass coverage was 90%
- Halodule was found 66% of the time
- Thalassia was found 40% of the time
- Syringodium was found 30% of the time
- Halophila decipiens was found twice
- Ruppia was found once
- Halodule covered 14% of the bottom, Thalassia and Syringodium covered 12% each, on average
- Maximum Thalassia and Halodule coverage was 90%; maximum Syringodium coverage was 75%
- Thalassia blade length was 17 cm, Syringodium 21 cm, and Halodule was 12 cm, on average
- Attached algae was found in 3% of the locations surveyed
- Epiphytes covered 38% of the seagrass surface, on average
- Epiphyte coverage was never 100%
- Drift algae was reported as 100% coverage and greater than one foot thickness at only two locations
- Drift algae coverage was 37%, on average
- Seagrasses were most often found in sandy sediments
- Biology observed included sea squirts, urchins, oysters, bryozoans, jellyfish, scallops, coral and sponges

Seagrass has great value ecologically and economically and is in a state of decline in many places around the globe because of pollution, human disturbance and invasive species. The continued presence of healthy seagrass in Sarasota County is an indicator of the improving management of wastewater and stormwater.

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