

Fostering Community Support

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program seeks to create a constituency of informed, involved citizens that understand the importance of Tampa Bay to the region's overall quality of life.

A cornerstone of these efforts is the **Bay Mini-Grants Program**, funded by sales of the Tampa Bay Estuary specialty license tag. The Mini-Grants program provides yearly grants to community organizations for bay restoration or education projects.



As of 2004, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program has awarded more than \$350,000 in Bay Mini-Grants.

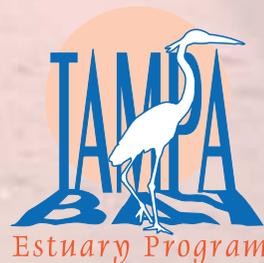
TBEP also sponsors regular volunteer workdays, called "Give A Day For The Bay," and special events such as the annual "Estuary Academy," televised public forums and teacher training workshops.

Educational materials include guides, videos and posters on safe boating, wildlife protection, Florida-friendly landscaping, and invasive species.



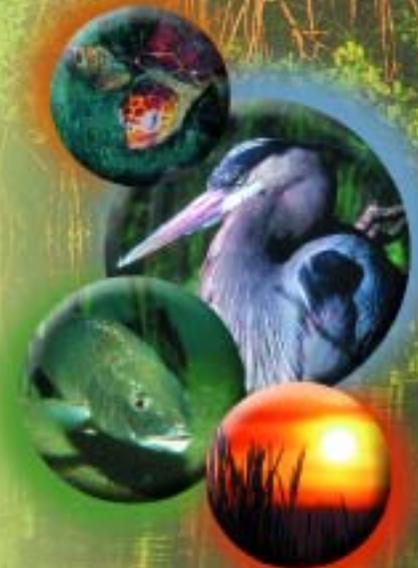
TERRIFIC Tampa Bay!

- The Tampa Bay estuary is 400 square miles with a watershed six times that large. Tampa Bay is on average only 12 feet deep.
- As many as 40,000 pairs of 25 species of birds – from the familiar brown pelican to the colorful roseate spoonbill – nest on islands in Tampa Bay every year. Collectively, these islands are the most important sites for colony-nesting birds in Florida.
- A single quart of bay water may contain as many as 1 million phytoplankton organisms, which serve as the foundation of the bay's "who eats who" food web.
- More than 100 tributaries flow into Tampa Bay, including dozens of meandering, brackish water creeks and four major rivers: the Hillsborough, Alafia, Manatee and Little Manatee.
- More than 200 species of fish are found in Tampa Bay. The most numerous species are small baitfish such as the bay anchovy and the pinfish.



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Tampa Bay Estuary PROGRAM



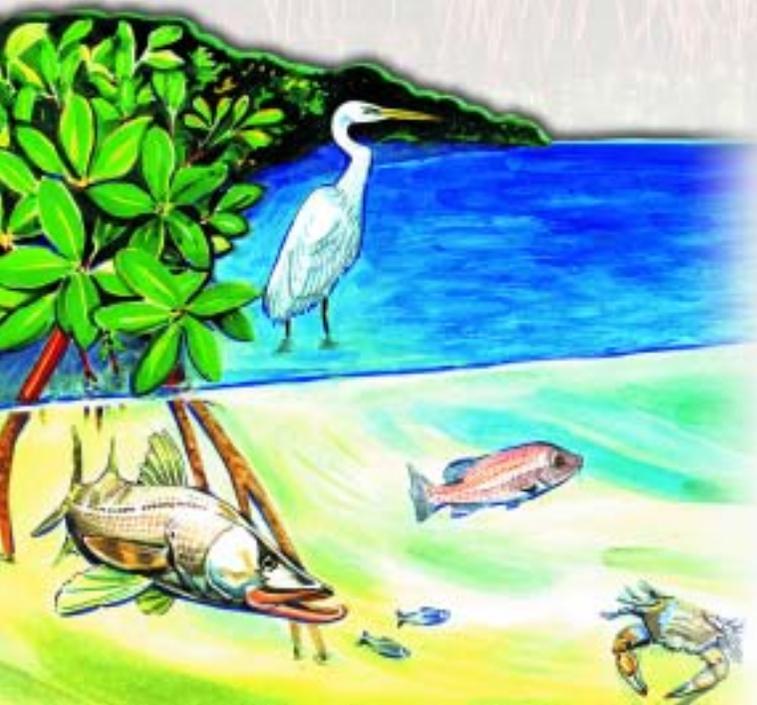
**A Partnership
for a Healthy Bay**

Tampa Bay, Florida's largest open-water estuary, was designated an "estuary of national significance" by Congress in 1990, setting the stage for development of a long-term blueprint for bay restoration through the **Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP)**.

Established in 1991 under the Clean Water Act and administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, **TBEP** is one of 28 National Estuary Programs around the country. Local and state partners include Pinellas, Hillsborough and Manatee counties; the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater; the Southwest Florida Water Management District; and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. TBEP also works hand-in-hand with bay area scientists, citizens and industries to achieve the goals set forth in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Tampa Bay, called "**Charting the Course.**"

"**Charting the Course**" incorporates broad-based input from diverse stakeholders who share a common interest in a healthy bay. The Plan presents practical, cost-effective and environmentally beneficial strategies for continuing bay improvement.

In 1998, local government and agency partners of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program signed a formal Interlocal Agreement that commits them to achieving the goals presented in "**Charting The Course.**"



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Charting the Course to a Healthy Bay

"**Charting The Course**" contains six major action plans addressing the following areas: water and sediment quality, bay habitats, fish and wildlife, spill prevention and response, dredging and dredged material management, and invasive species.

Every five years, the Plan is revised to reflect collective community progress made in improving the bay, and address new or emerging challenges.

Among the Plan's key goals:

- ✿ Reducing the amount of harmful nitrogen reaching the bay to ensure water quality suitable for recovering 12,000 acres of life-sustaining seagrasses.
- ✿ Restoring roughly 100 acres every five years of low-salinity tidal marshes that serve as vital fish nurseries.
- ✿ Increasing the number, diversity and health of the bay's fish and wildlife populations by improving the areas in which they live, feed and reproduce.

Linking Science and Management

In its first decade, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program sponsored or helped to sponsor approximately \$5 million dollars in scientific research on priority bay issues.

This research has:

- ✿ Documented the strong link between air pollution and water quality in Tampa Bay. Studies indicate that as much as one-third of the excess nitrogen entering the bay comes from power plant emissions and mobile sources such as cars.
- ✿ Identified factors other than water quality – including wave action and sediment contamination – that may affect the recovery of seagrass beds.
- ✿ Shaped a landmark "restoring the balance" strategy that calls for recreating, over time, the historic ratio of habitat types in Tampa Bay.
- ✿ Explored the types and extent of marine invasive species in Tampa Bay, revealing some 55 known, suspected or potential invaders.

