

Southeast Florida Action Network

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Coral Reef Conservation Program

2023 in Review



866-770-SEFL (7335)

SEAFAN.NET

The Southeast Florida Action Network (SEAFAN) is a citizen reporting and response system with the goal of improving the protection and management of Southeast Florida's offshore coral reefs and marine ecosystem. The program enhances marine debris cleanup efforts, improves response to vessel groundings and anchor damage and provides early detection of potentially harmful biological disturbances.

The 2023 newsletter highlights the different locations and types of reports that were made this year. Additionally, it highlights the numerous outreach events that SEAFAN participated in and collaborative efforts with our partners. This newsletter also highlights success stories, who our top SEAFAN reporter is for 2023 and the most reported incident.

Incident Types

Each red dot on the locator map represents an incident that was reported in 2023.

The pie graph below indicates the types of incidents and the percentage in which they were reported this year. Marine Debris and Coral Bleaching are the top two incidents reported. These numbers help us recognize what types of occurrences are impacting South Florida the most, allowing us to take action as needed.

The bar graph indicates the number of incidents reported per county. Although our jurisdiction comprises the northern third of Florida's Coral Reef, our partnership with Monroe County allows their reporting through SEAFAN. As you can see on the bar graph below, Monroe has the highest percentage of reports in 2023, with Miami-Dade closely following. After reviewing the data, we can determine which incidents are more abundant in each county and locate the source of the problem.

Scheenburg

Port St Lucie

Port St Lucie

Port St Lucie

Port St Lucie

Cape Conal

Immolate

Coraleprings

Port St Lucie

Coraleprings

Permitted Prints

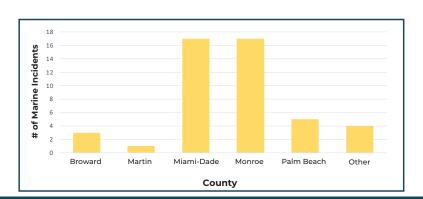
Carmil

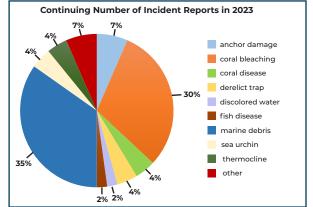
Corrected Prints

Carmil

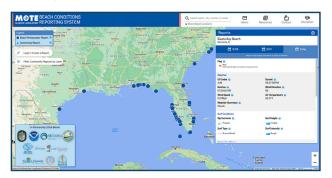
Marine debris reports are used to coordinate future cleanup efforts. Other reports of possible biological events (e.g., fish kills and coral bleaching) are tracked to determine spatial extent and duration of the incident. If necessary, vessel grounding or anchor damage reports are followed by <u>site</u>

assessments and response efforts.





SEAFAN works with supporting agencies, along with regional and federal partners to resolve reported issues in an effort to protect Southeast Florida's coral reefs and treasured marine ecosystem. One of our most recent partners is <u>Mission: Iconic Reef Guardians</u>. They work directly with <u>Blue Star Dive</u> operators to help scuba divers and snorkelers become stewards of coral restoration efforts. Their learning modules teach the importance of how to utilize the SEAFAN and BleachWatch reporting systems.



Through our partnership with Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, anyone can become a Beach Ambassador and submit detailed condition reports like weather, surf conditions, tides, jellyfish and more. Your SEAFAN reports may also appear on Mote's Beach Conditions and Reporting System which acts as a public information tool where users can find condition reports, local amenities and educational materials at VisitBeaches.org.

Our partnerships in the Keys have nearly doubled the number of reports received from Monroe County. Even SEAFAN reports made outside of our jurisdiction are shared with the appropriate agency to assist in resolving the incident.

Outreach Events

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) participates in outreach events to educate the public about Florida's Coral Reef, stressing the importance of reporting marine incidents, the benefits of SEAFAN and how to utilize the system. In 2023, SEAFAN was recognized at multiple events to include: the annual Tortuga Music Festival on Fort Lauderdale Beach.

- The annual Tortuga Music Festival on Fort Lauderdale Beach.
- · The Pompano and Deerfield Beach Pier cleanups.
- International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades (ICAST).
- I.CARE Trash Derby.
- Florida Keys Lionfish Derby and Festival.
- ReeFLorida Symposium Frost Science Museum.
- Florida Marine Science Educators Association (FMSEA).

Our 12th Annual Reef Cleanup events took place in July and August in partnership with several local dive shops. You can find additional scheduled cleanups on the <u>Shore-Based Beach Cleanups</u> page of DEP's website.







SEAFAN SUCCESS STORIES

In August of 2023, there was a SEAFAN Marine Debris report of a large net that was called in over the radio in Indian Key channel. DEP partnered with Florida Sea Base and Lignumvitae State Park in Monroe County on a cleanup project and removed the reported 500 lb. net from the water. Trapped inside was a small shark about 2 feet in length and was freed when the net was removed. A net of this size can cause mortality to multiple marine species and serious damage to coral reefs.











In June of 2023, a SEAFAN report was sent in by a citizen visiting Florida. After noticing a large but shattered sailboat washed ashore on Palm Beach, she found SEAFAN via an internet search on DEP's website.

The report was shared with our partner agencies including Palm Beach County, Florida Fish and Wildlife as well as other DEP offices and the surrounding condominiums of the private beach this vessel washed ashore on.

The owner of this vessel was contacted and after parameters were implemented for safe removal, avoiding turtle nests and possible destruction of marine habitat, the vessel was removed. A site check took place by DEP's Coral Reef Conservation Program staff to ensure there was no damage made to the nearshore hardbottom or possible surrounding habitat.

For easy access to the SEAFAN report form scan the QR code below.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

Top SEAFAN reporter of 2023: Bonnie Waxman

Most common report: Marine Debris

PARTNERS









Thank you, SEAFAN reporters, for a great 2023 season! We greatly appreciate your continued efforts to submit marine incident reports. Whether you are boating, diving or at the beach, remember to look out for marine debris and other marine incidents to help us improve and protect Southeast Florida's marine ecosystem.

With every report you will receive a certificate and might be featured in the next newsletter!

For more information, visit <u>SEAFAN</u> and <u>Florida's Coral Reef</u> to report incidents and learn more about how you can help! For additional questions, regarding SEAFAN, you can contact <u>Lara Bracci.</u>

Coral Reef Conservation Program
Florida Department of Environmental Protection