

# *Estuary Exchange*

*August 2026*



**ST. ANDREW & ST. JOSEPH BAYS**  
**ESTUARY PROGRAM**  
*at* FSU PANAMA CITY

*Together for the Bays*



*Life on the Lines*

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# ON THE Life Lines

ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
at FSU PANAMA CITY

## 2025-2026 VERTICAL OYSTER GARDEN REPORT

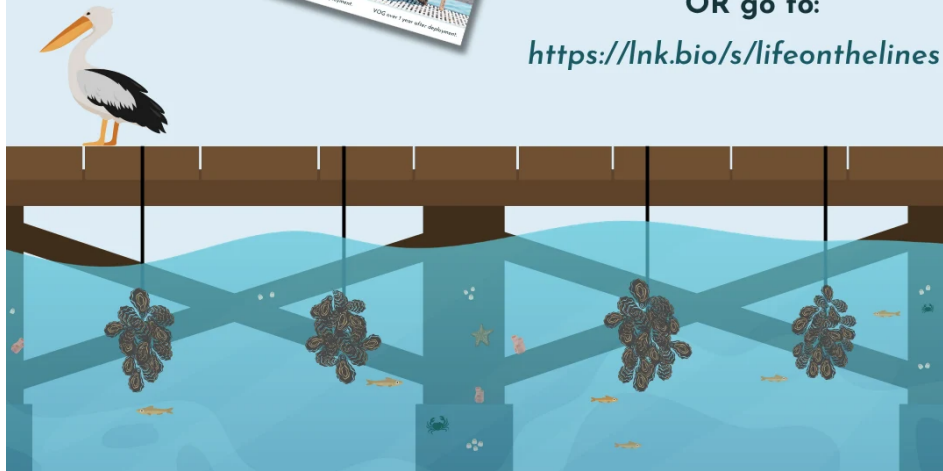


Scan to view



OR go to:

<https://lnk.bio/s/lifeonthelines>



Curious about what's growing beneath our docks? This year's Life on the Lines report compiles data from Vertical Oyster Garden (VOG) monitoring throughout St. Andrew Bay. Take a look at the growth and how many other species call these VOGs home! We couldn't do this without our amazing volunteer VOG network that are helping us restore our local waters! Interested in becoming a host? Follow the link and sign up to become an oyster gardener!

[Learn More](#)

## Tides and Talks

Join us for

# Tides & Talks



## Shuck to Shore: Oyster Restoration Program

With Dr. Ryann Rossi - Estuary Scientist,  
St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary  
Program

**When:** Thursday, September 13th, 3-4pm CDT

**Where:** Destination Panama City  
Or join online via zoom



### Our monthly Tides and Talks event is back!

Join us at Destination Panama City on Thursday, September 13th as we hear from our very own estuary scientist Dr. Ryann Rossi on the Estuary Program's oyster recycling and restoration program: Shuck to Shore. Learn about our oyster recycling process, vertical oyster garden monitoring results, and ways that you can get involved! Click the link below to register online and tune in via zoom, or come in person and be a part of the conversation.

Register

## *Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Monitoring Network*

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# HAB MONITORING TRAINING EVENTS

AUGUST  
2026

11<sup>TH</sup>  
TUES

4:30-5:00PM ET  
**POINT SOUTH MARINA**  
PORT ST. JOE

13<sup>TH</sup>  
THURS

5-5:30PM CT  
**FSU PC**  
PANAMA CITY

18<sup>TH</sup>  
TUES

5:30-6:00PM ET  
**POINT SOUTH MARINA**  
PORT ST. JOE

20<sup>TH</sup>  
THURS

4-4:30PM CT  
**FSU PC**  
PANAMA CITY



REGISTER HERE:  
[HTTPS://LNK.BIO/S/SASJBEP/EVENTBRITE](https://lnk.bio/s/sasjbep/eventbrite)



ST. ANDREW &  
ST. JOSEPH BAYS  
ESTUARY PROGRAM  
of FSU PANAMA CITY

Interested in helping monitor the health of our bays?

Become part of our HAB Network and assist in identifying harmful algal blooms like red tide in St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays! By collecting and submitting water samples, you contribute to a community-led "early warning system" that enables informed and timely action. Training opportunities are available for both Port St. Joe and Panama City. Select a date and RSVP at the links below.

See Dates and RSVP

## *Pouring Love this September*





### *Pouring Love for the Bays!*

September is packed with ways to celebrate and support our bays! From National Estuaries Week and International Coastal Cleanup Day to the return of Race for the Bays, there's no shortage of ways to get involved. And this year, we're also the honored recipient of Pouring Love, a month-long fundraising campaign hosted by History Class Brewing Company in support of the Estuary Program!

Bring your family and friends out throughout September to enjoy a drink, grab a bite, and show some love for our local waterways. Then, save the date for the History Class Bingo & Raffle for the Estuary Program on Sunday, September 13 at 1 p.m. We hope to see you there!

### *Race for the Bays*

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### *Race for the Bays 2026 is right around the corner!*

Race for the Bays 2026 is just 2 months away! Whether you're a runner, volunteer, or local business, there's a place for you at this year's event. Every registration, volunteer, and sponsorship helps support the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program's work to protect and restore our local waterways.

Register by August 28 to receive your official event shirt!

Learn more, sign up, volunteer, or become a sponsor at [sasjbep.org/raceforthebays](https://sasjbep.org/raceforthebays). We hope to see you at the starting line!

Race for the Bays

## *Board Member Spotlight*

Our watershed thrives because of passionate individuals committed to its protection and restoration. To honor these efforts, we're sharing our appreciation by highlighting the members of our Policy Board. Each month, we'll introduce you to those working behind the scenes to help strengthen our community and support the long-term well-being of our watershed.



### Policy Board Member Spotlight: Mayor Allan Branch

Mayor Allan Branch serves on the SASJBEP Policy Board with a deep appreciation for the bays that helped shape his childhood. Growing up along St. Andrew Bay, he spent countless hours sailing, scalloping, fishing, and exploring the water with family and friends. It wasn't until he left for college that he fully realized how much the bay meant to him. Today, returning to his childhood home along the Bay remains a way to reconnect and recharge and reinforces his commitment to protecting one of the community's most defining natural resources.

For Mayor Branch, the health of the watershed and bays is about far more than seafood or recreation but rather it is the area's identity and the fabric of the community. As a Policy Board member, he sees his role as helping connect people, champion good ideas, and support science-based solutions that benefit the bays. Drawing from his experience as an entrepreneur and problem-solver, he brings a practical perspective focused on finding achievable solutions and understanding the tradeoffs that often accompany complex decisions.

Looking ahead, Branch hopes to see continued improvements in stormwater and wastewater management, stronger stewardship of local waterways, and healthier scallop and oyster populations. He is also passionate about public education and helping residents understand both the value and fragility of the bay ecosystem. He is a strong believer that individual actions can make a meaningful difference. When he's not working, Mayor Branch enjoys diving, exploring local creeks, and spending time on the bay that he refers to as his childhood backyard.

## *Science Corner*

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*Turtle grass (Thalassia testudinum) fruit and seeds*

### How do seagrasses reproduce?

What do your lawn and our local seagrass meadows have in common? More than you might think! Like the grass in your yard, seagrasses spread by growing underground stems and producing seeds. Both strategies help these underwater plants thrive and keep our bays healthy.

Seagrasses such as turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) reproduce through both asexual (vegetative) and sexual mechanisms- just like the grass in our yard!

Asexual reproduction is the main way that established seagrass meadows expand. Seagrasses produce horizontal underground stems called rhizomes that grow through the sediment and generate new shoots and roots. These new shoots are genetically identical clones of the parent plant. This method is highly effective for expanding seagrass beds and is the most common method of reproduction.

Sexual reproduction occurs through the production of flowers, pollen, fruits, and seeds. Turtle grass, a type of seagrass commonly found in St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays, is dioecious (male and female flowers occur on separate plants). Pollen is transported underwater by currents to fertilize female flowers. There is some evidence that [critters like worms and crustaceans may even act as sea bees to pollinate the flowers](#)! Once fertilized, fruits develop and release seeds that are swept away in currents to reproduce elsewhere. This process is critical for maintaining genetic diversity, which is important in enhancing resilience to stressors.

While both methods of reproduction are useful, neither is foolproof. Not all seeds may make it to an ideal settlement area and may wash ashore. SASJBEP staff and volunteers have been collecting some of the seeds that have washed ashore to grow in our seagrass nursery at Arnold High funded by the St. Joe Foundation to help restore seagrass populations within the bays.

References:



<https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/57791>

van Tussenbroek, B., Villamil, N., Márquez-Guzmán, J. *et al.* Experimental evidence of pollination in marine flowers by invertebrate fauna. *Nat Commun* 7, 12980 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms12980>

## Recent Relevant Research

*Click the images to view articles.*



Evaluating wooden dowel rods for seagrass restoration: Effects on seagrass, sediment, and bioturbation in northwest florida.



Building Environmental Stewards: The Power of Place-Based Education in Gulf Coast Marine Literacy.

## Water Safety

Summer is here! Please remember to exercise water safety when visiting the beach. Click the images below to view resources that keep you safe and updated.



[Florida Healthy Beaches Program](#)



[Red Tide Status](#)



[Beach Flags](#)



[Rip Current Safety](#)

Always be sure to leave no trace and keep the beaches clean, dark, and flat for wildlife.



September 13th, 2026

## History Class Pouring Love Bingo

**When:** Sunday, September 13th at 1pm CT

**Where:** History Class Brewing Company, 6 E 4th St, Panama City, FL 32401

Join us for History Class's Pouring Love Bingo Day! All proceeds will be donated to the St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program.



September 19th, 2026

## International Coastal Cleanup Day

**When:** Saturday, September 19th

**Where:** Lake Powell Park

Come make a difference this International Coastal Cleanup Day and join a cleanup near you! We will be joining the annual cleanup hosted by the Lake Powell Community Alliance at Lake Powell Park, and hosting a cleanup with our own teen Bay Ambassadors Club.



September 26th, 2026

## 2026 Race for the Bays

**When:** Saturday, September 26th at 7am  
CT

**Where:** Panama City Beach Conservation  
Park

Run, walk, or volunteer for the Bays! Join  
us for a 5k, 10k, or fun run to support the  
St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary  
Program this National Estuaries Week.

[Learn more and register here.](#)

## Community Events

Click the images to explore upcoming events throughout the St. Andrew Bay Watershed!



*Events in Panama City*



*Events in Panama City Beach*



*Events in South Walton County*



*Events in Gulf County*



*Events in Mexico Beach*



*Gulf County Chamber of  
Commerce - Events*

## Upcoming Meetings

### Policy Board Meeting



August 26th, 2026

1:00pm-3:00pm CDT; Holley Building Deans Conference Room A301

<https://fsu.zoom.us/j/92952009149> Meeting ID: [929 5200 9149](https://fsu.zoom.us/j/92952009149)



Join Zoom

## Management Council Meeting

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August 14th, 2026

10am-12pm CDT; Holley Building Deans Conference Room A301

<https://fsu.zoom.us/j/98935905084> Meeting ID: [989 3590 5084](https://fsu.zoom.us/j/98935905084)

Join Zoom

## Science and Technical Committee Meeting

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August 20th, 2026

1:00 - 2:00 PM CDT; Admin Services Conference Room 108

<https://fsu.zoom.us/j/98113140851?pwd=piaQ6FHWl1BubYjOiKNYTCzsB5Vbnb.1>

Meeting ID: [981 1314 0851](https://fsu.zoom.us/j/98113140851?pwd=piaQ6FHWl1BubYjOiKNYTCzsB5Vbnb.1) Passcode: 896475

Join Zoom

## Stormwater Working Group

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November 10th, 2026

11am-12:30pm CDT; In person or virtual. Microsoft Teams Microsoft Teams Meeting:

Meeting ID: [298 629 766 841 06](https://teams.microsoft.com/j/29862976684106) Passcode: 4Dv3u69c

Join on Teams

## Community Action Committee Meeting

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Date TBD

Next meeting date to be determined.

## Bay Ambassadors Club Meeting

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August 22nd, 2026

Formerly known as the Teen Outreach Committee, join the Bay Ambassadors for their kickoff meeting to meet their fellow ambassadors and plan for the coming school year.

Join the Bay Ambassadors

To access all past meeting materials, notes, and presentations, visit our Library of Resources page on our website. Link directly by clicking below!

Library of Resources

Florida State University Panama City Campus Map

## Volunteer Opportunities

A poster for the SASJ Bays Volunteer Network. The background is a photograph of three people (two women and one man) standing in shallow water, possibly a bay or estuary, with trees in the background. The text on the poster is as follows:

**SASJ BAYS  
VOLUNTEER NETWORK**

**JOIN THE  
VOLUNTEER  
NETWORK!**

Interested in getting involved in protection and restoration efforts within the St. Andrew Bay Watershed?

**Join Our Email List!**

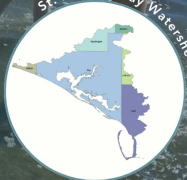
SASJ Bays Volunteer Network connects organizations across the watershed with citizens looking for an opportunity to get involved.

- **Organizations:** Connect with volunteers for your events
- **Volunteers:** Learn about volunteer opportunities from our partners all across the watershed

**JOIN NOW** 

[HTTPS://LISTS.FSU.EDU/MAILMAN/LISTINFO/VOLUNTEER-SASJBEP](https://lists.fsu.edu/mailman/listinfo/volunteer-sasjbep)

St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program

A circular inset map showing the St. Andrew Bay Watershed. The map is color-coded with green for land and blue for water. The text 'St. Andrew Bay Watershed' is written around the map.

The SASJ Bays Volunteer Network connects organizations with passionate members of the community that are interested getting involved. Join the email list to receive updates on upcoming volunteer opportunities from across the partners across the watershed and share organized events with others!

[Join the Email List](#)

[HAB/Water Quality Monitoring](#)

[Race for the Bays Volunteers Needed!](#)

## *Job Opportunities*

*Know of any industry-related jobs in or around our watershed? Let us know!*

## Student Assistantship

**GULF COAST RESEARCH LABORATORY**  
*The University of Southern Mississippi*  
The University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs, MS is looking to fund a Ph.D. Assistantship centered on a recently funded project to identify and monitor long-term trends and variability in seagrass-dominated ecosystems in the Gulf Islands National Seashore and identify drivers of change in biodiversity and productivity of these systems to inform coastal resource management.

Deadline to apply: August 31, 2026.

[Find out more](#)

**Contact us at** [estuaryprogram@pc.fsu.edu](mailto:estuaryprogram@pc.fsu.edu)



St. Andrew and St. Joseph Bays Estuary  
Program

[estuaryprogram@pc.fsu.edu](mailto:estuaryprogram@pc.fsu.edu)

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Panama City, FL 32405

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