

Little Sarasota Bay Condition Report for 2023



PASS



3 out of 3
indicators were
rated as **PASS**.

All three
indicators must pass for the bay to be rated as **PASS**.

Summary:

Little Sarasota Bay showed marked improvement in 2023. Hurricane Ian passed nearby in Sept. 2022, bringing record rainfall that washed pollutants into the bay and affected its water quality for months afterward, raising Total Nitrogen and Chlorophyll *a* levels. However, in 2023 the bay recovered. All indicators improved and are now at Excellent levels.

Note: Beginning in 2020, Sarasota County switched from measuring apparent color to true color. The latter will be added to Bay Conditions reports in the near future.



Bays included in this report:
Blind Pass, Little Sarasota Bay

Water Chemistry Ratings

Total nitrogen, total phosphorus, and chlorophyll *a* levels are monitored carefully by water resource managers and used by regulatory authorities to determine whether a bay meets the water quality standards mandated by the Clean Water Act. The trend graphs for these indicators are shown below, along with their target and threshold values. A target value is a desirable goal to be attained, while a threshold is an undesirable level which is to be

avoided. An individual indicator receives an "Excellent" rating if its mean value is below the target, a "Good" rating if its mean value is above the target but does not exceed the threshold, and a "Caution" rating if the mean value exceeds the threshold.

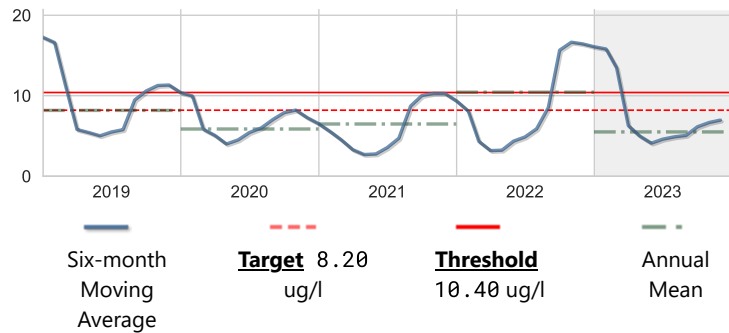
The charts below illustrate the general trend of water quality parameters. They show a six-month running average, which moderates high and low values in the data.



Chlorophyll a

Score: Excellent

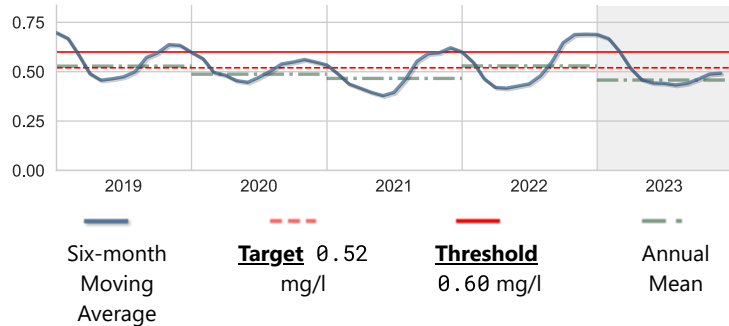
Units: ug/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	17.11	87.10
Mean	5.59	8.66
Low	1.57	0.09
No. of Samples	59	1070



Nitrogen, Total

Score: Excellent

Units: mg/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	0.672	1.435
Mean	0.468	0.504
Low	0.185	0.155
No. of Samples	59	1591

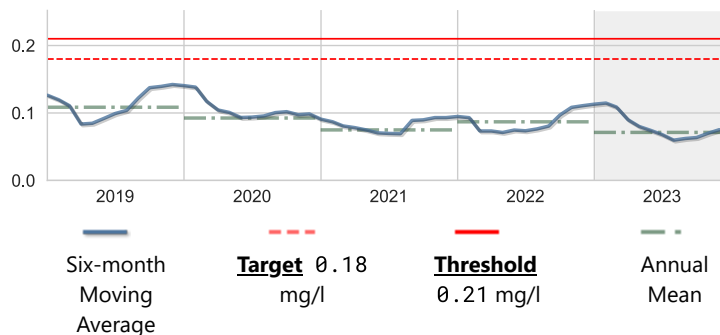




Phosphorus, Total

Score: Excellent

Units: mg/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	0.140	0.510
Mean	0.073	0.120
Low	0.050	0.050
No. of Samples	59	1579

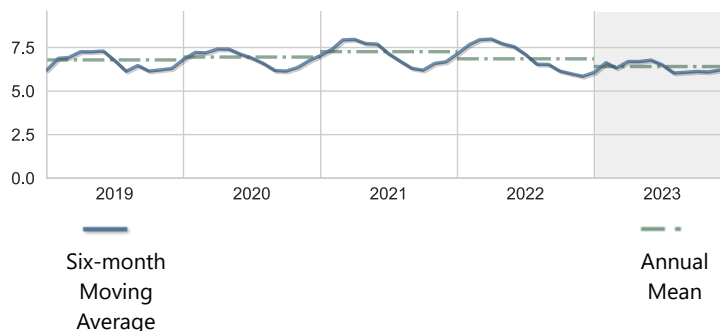


Other Measures of Bay Health

In addition to nutrient levels and chlorophyll concentration, dissolved oxygen levels, and water clarity are also objective indicators of bay health. These have complex interactive cycles which are affected by rainfall, temperature, and tidal action, as well as other factors. High nutrient levels (nitrogen and phosphorus) can stimulate excessive growth of marine algae (indicated by chlorophyll *a* level), resulting in reduced water clarity (and increased light attenuation) and depleted oxygen levels. Both plants and animals in a bay need oxygen to survive, and the seagrasses which provide food and cover for bay creatures need light for photosynthesis.

Dissolved Oxygen

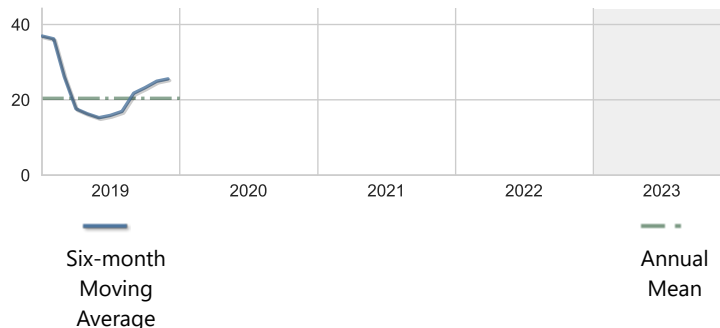
Units: mg/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	10.00	11.30
Mean	6.48	6.74
Low	4.56	2.80
No. of Samples	57	1224



Apparent Color

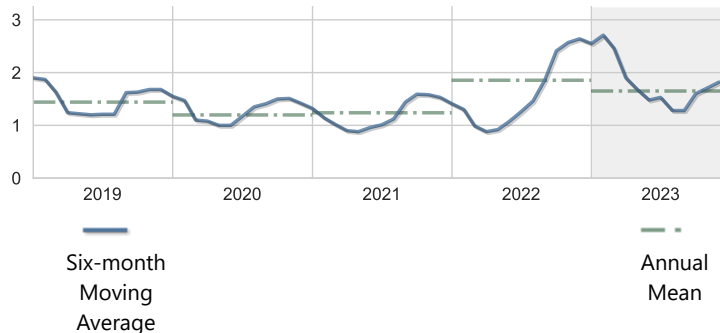
Note: The latest available sample for this parameter is from December 2019

Units: PCU	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High		160.00
Mean		24.51
Low		5.00
No. of Samples	0	1315



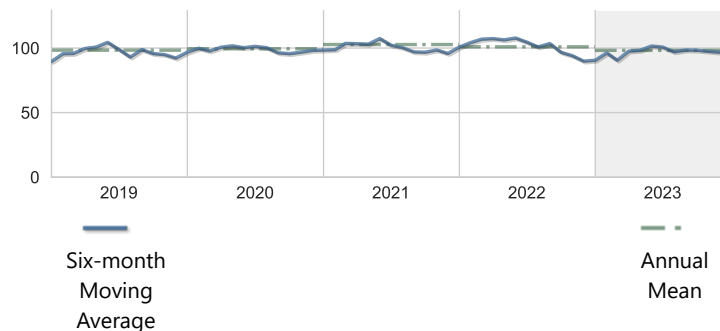
BOD, Biochemical oxygen demand

Units: mg/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	7.30	7.30
Mean	1.71	1.74
Low	0.70	0.50
No. of Samples	59	1463



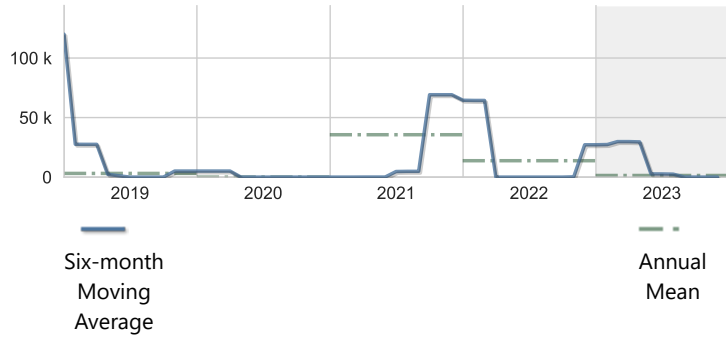
Dissolved oxygen saturation

Units: percent (%)	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	140.00	153.00
Mean	99.17	97.18
Low	78.00	45.00
No. of Samples	54	1333



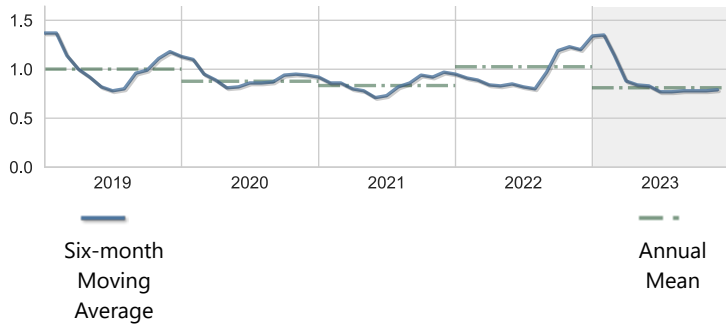
Karenia brevis ("red tide")

Units: #/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	6500.00	2603000.00
Mean	254.24	22284.11
Low	0.00	0.00
No. of Samples	59	1026



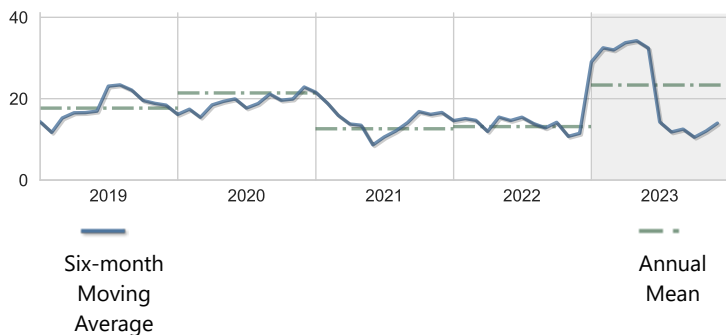
Light Attenuation

Units: K(1/m)	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	2.13	3.97
Mean	0.82	1.01
Low	0.33	0.14
No. of Samples	58	1540



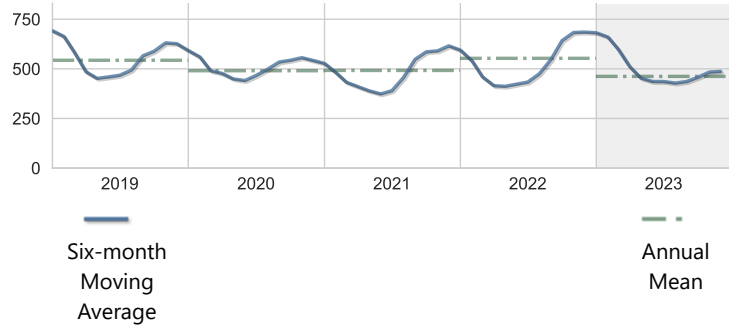
Nitrogen, Ammonia + Ammonium as N

Units: ug/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	216.00	246.00
Mean	22.42	16.49
Low	5.00	5.00
No. of Samples	59	1586



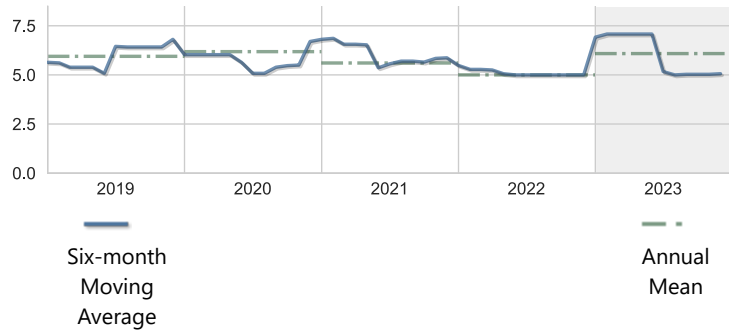
Nitrogen, Kjeldahl

Units: ug/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	660.00	1430.00
Mean	472.03	522.12
Low	180.00	150.00
No. of Samples	59	1591



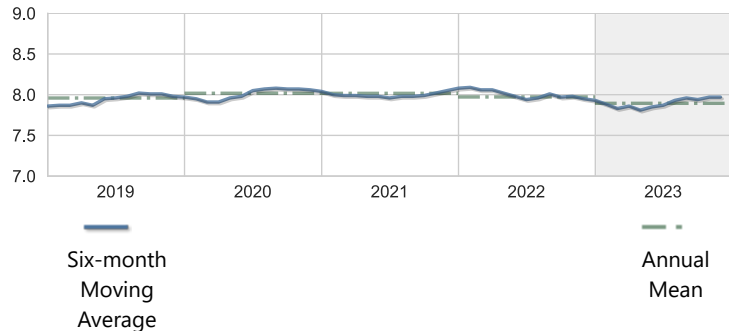
Nitrogen, Nitrite + Nitrate as N

Units: ug/l	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	21.00	92.00
Mean	6.03	6.68
Low	5.00	5.00
No. of Samples	59	1305



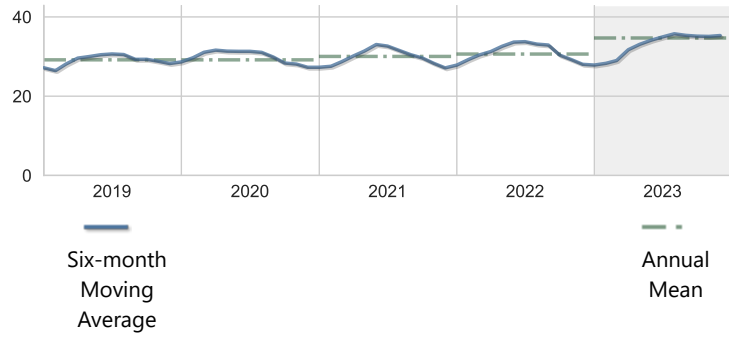
pH

Units: None	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	8.19	8.55
Mean	7.89	7.96
Low	7.66	7.10
No. of Samples	54	456



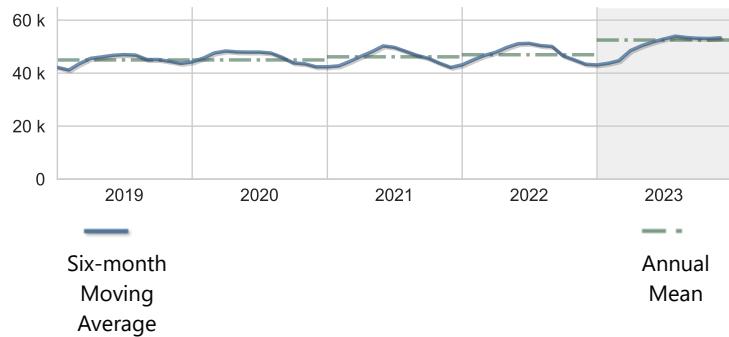
Salinity

Units: PSS	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	37.30	38.50
Mean	34.45	29.50
Low	29.80	7.30
No. of Samples	45	921



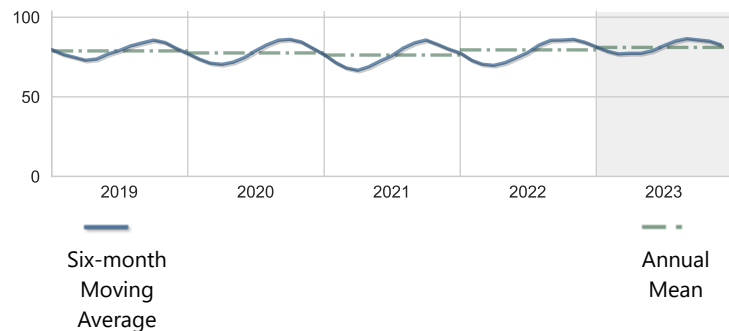
Specific conductance

Units: umho	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	56100.00	59020.00
Mean	52181.63	46266.80
Low	45900.00	12670.00
No. of Samples	49	1480



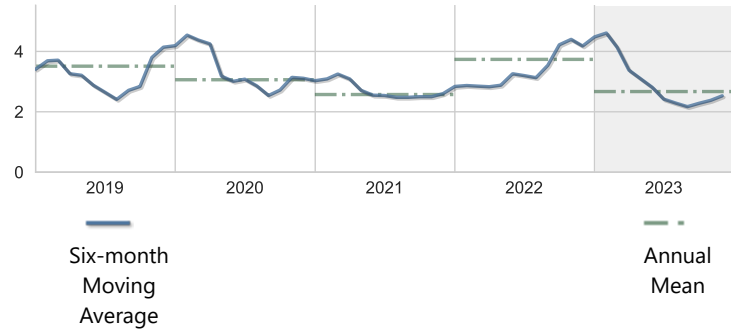
Temperature, water

Units: deg F	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	91.04	91.76
Mean	80.92	78.88
Low	69.44	47.66
No. of Samples	49	933



Turbidity

Units: NTU	Year 2023	Historical period of record
High	11.00	18.00
Mean	2.72	3.86
Low	1.00	0.60
No. of Samples	59	1594



Annual Averages

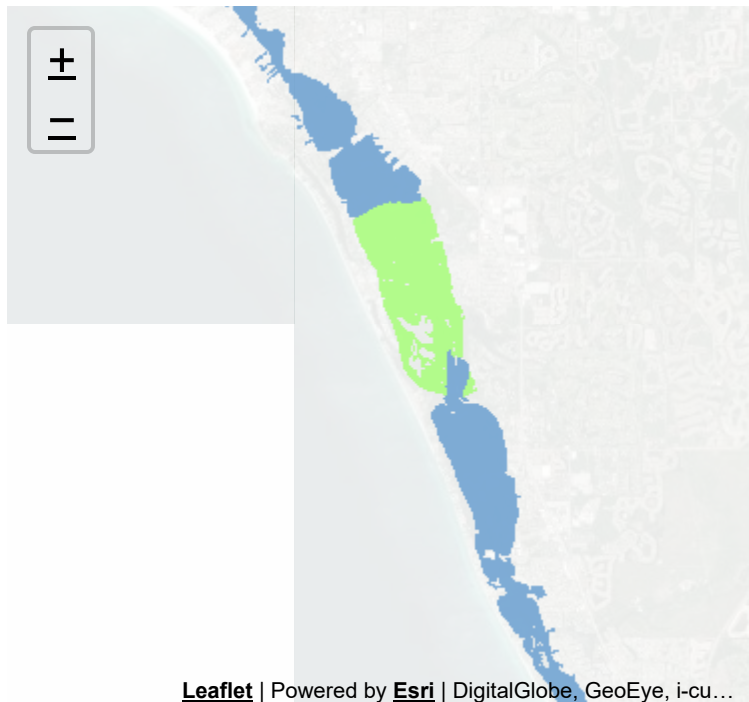
Indicator	Units	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Trend
Dissolved Oxygen	mg/l	6.79	6.95	7.26	6.85	6.48	
Dissolved oxygen saturation	percent (%)	98.33	99.41	102.72	100.94	99.17	
Light Attenuation	K(1/m)	1.00	0.88	0.83	1.03	0.82	
Salinity	PSS	29.17	29.17	30.03	30.63	34.45	
Turbidity	NTU	3.51	3.06	2.57	3.74	2.72	

Bay Contour Maps (2023)

Contour mapping is one of the best ways to visualize spatial differences in coastal water quality. The interactive map shown below presents monthly data for one selected water quality indicator atop an aerial view of the bay. Choose a different water quality parameter from the list at the top to change the map.

Showing 2023 Monthly Contour Maps for: Chlorophyll a ▼

January



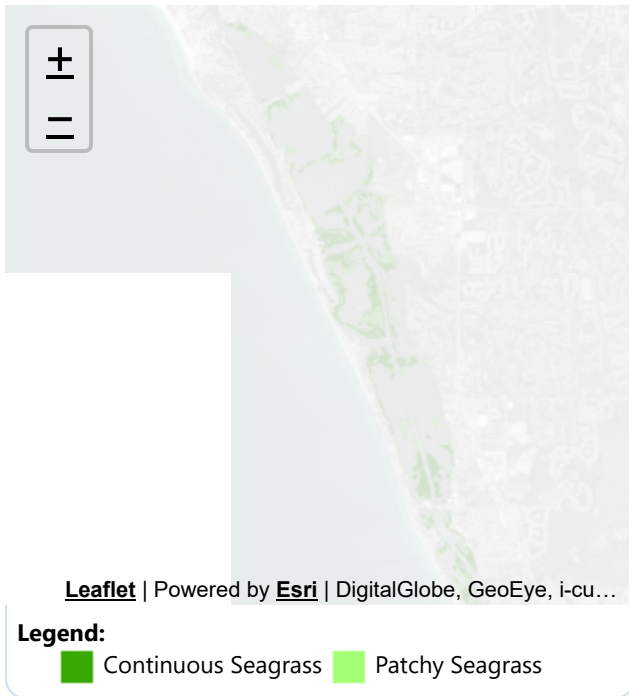
Contour Legend:

- Less than 1 ug/l
- 1.0 - 5.9 ug/l
- 6.0 - 10.9 ug/l
- 11.0 - 17.9 ug/l
- Greater than 18 ug/l

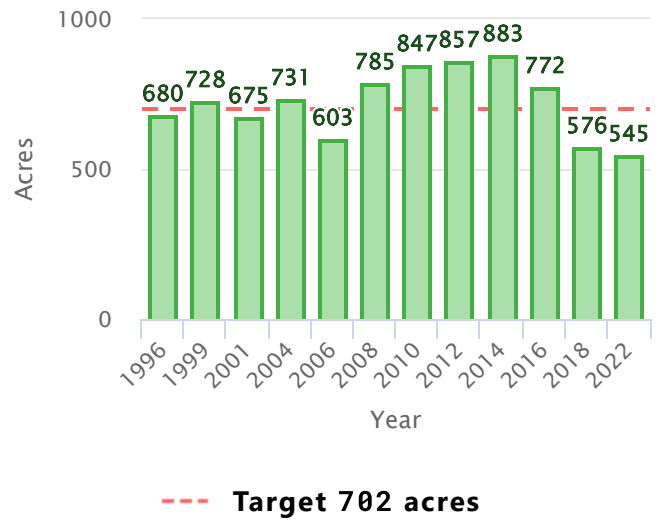
Seagrasses

Among the most important habitats in Florida's estuarine environments, seagrass beds are indispensable for the role they play in cycling nutrients, supplying food for wildlife, stabilizing sediments, and providing habitat for juvenile and adult finfish and shellfish. Use the interactive map below to observe the size, density and location of seagrass beds from year to year. The graph shows how the total amount of seagrass in the bay has changed over time. Seagrass calculations are aggregates of patchy and continuous seagrass measurements only. Recordings of attached algae are not included in these summaries.

Showing Seagrass Coverage for 2022:



Seagrass Acreage Variation within Little Sarasota Bay



Impervious Features

Rain that falls on land that is in a natural state is absorbed and filtered by soils and vegetation as it makes its way into underground aquifers. However, in developed areas, "impervious surfaces" impede this process and contribute to polluted urban runoff entering surface waters. These surfaces include human infrastructure like roads, sidewalks, driveways and parking lots that are covered by impenetrable materials such as asphalt, concrete, brick and stone, as well as buildings and other permanent structures. Soils that have been disturbed and compacted by urban development are often impervious as well.

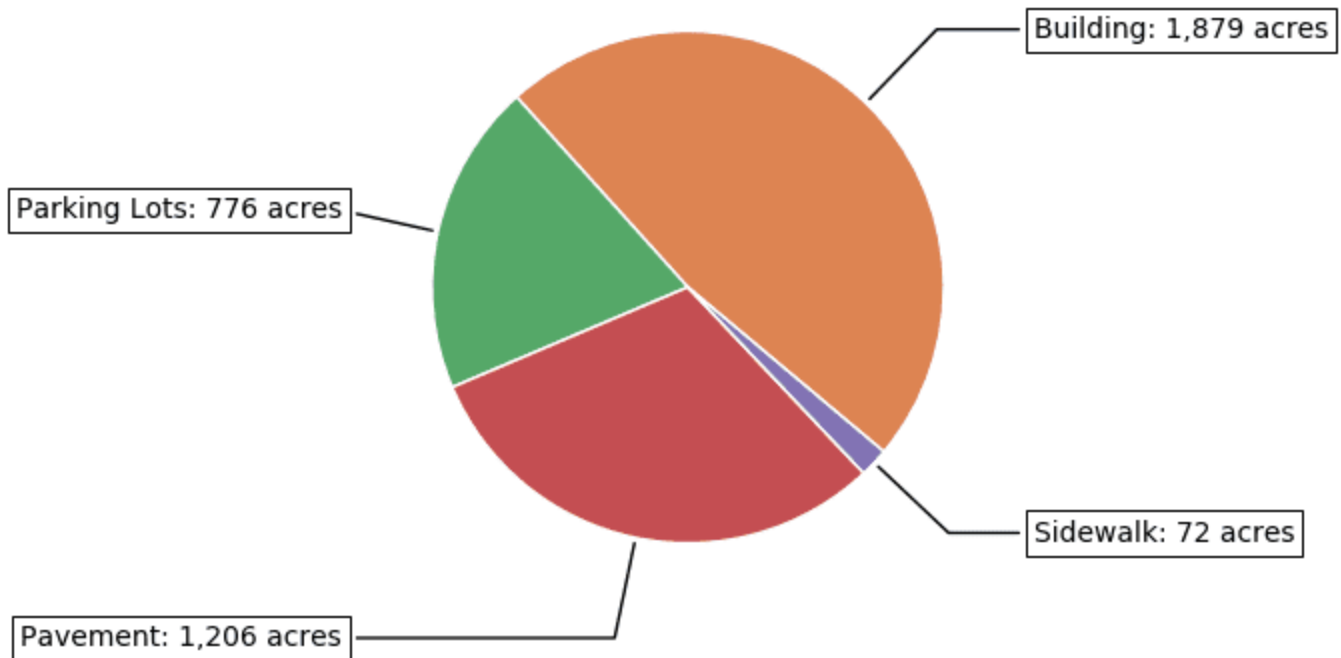


14% of the land area within the **Little Sarasota Bay Watershed** is covered by

impervious surfaces

2014 Impervious Surface Coverage by Type

in acres, within the Little Sarasota Bay Watershed





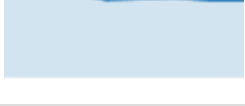

Land Use / Land Cover

Land use within a bay's watershed has a major effect on its water quality. In general, less development means better water quality. Land Cover/Land Use classifications categorize land in terms of its observed physical surface characteristics (upland or wetland, e.g.), and also reflect the types of activity that are taking place on it (agriculture, urban/built-up, utilities, etc.). Florida uses as its standard a set of statewide classifications which were developed by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Little Sarasota Bay is located within the Little Sarasota Bay Watershed. The chart below shows the land use / land cover characteristics for Little Sarasota Bay Watershed within the boundary of this Water Atlas. **[View details about the Little Sarasota Bay Watershed](#)**
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Acreeage and Percentage within each Land Use / Land Cover Category for Little Sarasota Bay Watershed

2023 Bay Conditions Report for Little Sarasota Bay

Land Use Classification	1990	2005	2011	2014	2017	2020	Trend
Urban & Built-up	8,943 31.9%	11,834 42.2%	12,102 43.1%	12,162 43.3%	12,777 45.5%	13,343 47.5%	
Agriculture	3,550 12.6%	3,228 11.5%	3,258 11.6%	4,223 15%	3,124 11.1%	2,837 10.1%	
Rangeland	825 2.9%	1,822 6.5%	1,474 5.3%	579 2.1%	1,233 4.4%	877 3.1%	
Upland Forests	7,098 25.3%	3,066 10.9%	2,981 10.6%	2,725 9.7%	2,687 9.6%	2,603 9.3%	
Water	3,429 12.2%	4,123 14.7%	4,147 14.8%	4,175 14.9%	4,227 15.1%	4,337 15.5%	
Wetlands	3,490 12.4%	3,133 11.2%	3,191 11.4%	3,227 11.5%	3,121 11.1%	3,120 11.1%	
Barren Land	62 0.2%	18 0.1%	19 0.1%	20 0.1%	6 0%	6 0%	
Transportation and Utilities	675 2.4%	841 3%	892 3.2%	952 3.4%	898 3.2%	948 3.4%	

2020 Land Use / Land Cover for Little Sarasota Bay Watershed

as a percentage of land area for this watershed

