

One of the Largest Marine Science Clusters in the Southeast U.S.

Private Industry – Government – Academia – Nonprofit

History of the Ocean Team and its Member Organizations 1955-2025

1955

Florida Board of Conservation Marine Laboratory is established in St. Petersburg.

1960

Oceanographic courses begin at University of South Florida's (USF) Bayboro Campus (now the USF College of Marine Science).

1967

Marine Science Institute is founded on the USF's Bayboro Campus at the former US Maritime Base.

1968

Florida State Board of Conservation Marine Laboratory is renamed to the Florida State Board of Conservation Marine Research Laboratory.

1969

Florida State Board of Conservation Marine Research Laboratory is renamed to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Marine Research Laboratory.

USF Marine Science Institute doubles in size.

1970

First National Science Foundation (NSF) grant is awarded to the USF Marine Science Institute.

1971

USF Department of Marine Science is formed within the USF College of Natural Sciences.

1972

Office of Naval Research awards first contract to the USF Department of Marine Science.

1978

Florida Board of Regents designates the USF Department of Marine Science as a "Center of Excellence."

History of the Ocean Team and its Member Organizations 1955-2025

1982

Standalone Ph.D. program in Marine Science at USF is launched.

First fellowship for a USF Marine Science graduate student is established by Nelson Poynter Fund in honor of John B. Lake, publisher of the St. Petersburg Times.

Marine Science major is established at Eckerd College.

1983

DNR Marine Research Laboratory is renamed the DNR Bureau of Marine Research.

1986

Gulf Oceanographic Charitable Trust endows two fellowships for marine science graduate students and USF receives the first matching funds from Florida's new major gifts program.

1988

US Geological Survey (USGS) selects St. Pete as the home for the National Center for Coastal Geology. DNR Bureau of Marine Research is retitled DNR Florida Marine Research Institute.

1991

USF Department of Marine Sciences sponsors its first Oceanography Camp for Girls.

Department of Natural Resources and the USF Department of Marine Sciences have Joint Research Facility groundbreaking.

Tampa Bay National Estuary Program (TBNEP) is established.

1993

USF Department of Marine Science sets up physical oceanography real-time system (PORTS).

Tampa Bay Watch is founded.

Galbraith Marine Science Laboratory is dedicated at Eckerd College.

DNR Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) is renamed the Department of Environmental Protection, FMRI.

1994

Florida legislature provides funds for five engineering positions to establish the Center for Ocean Technology (COT) within the USF Department of Marine Science.

Tampa Bay Watch's Grasses in Classes constructs the first nursery.

1995

The Carbon Retention in a Colored Ocean (CARIACO) Ocean Time-Series Program is established.

1996

The first live satellite television broadcasts for USF Project Oceanography are transmitted to middle schools throughout the United States.

History of the Ocean Team and its Member Organizations 1955-2025

1997

Multiagency (ONR, NOAA, NASA, EPA), multi-investigator study of Florida's western coastal ocean begins the Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms (ECOHAB).

1998

Tampa Bay Watch completes the first oyster shell project at Crisp Park in St. Petersburg.

1999

USF establishes a Science Journalism Center consisting of a partnership between the Department of Marine Science and the College of Mass Communications Department of Environmental Protection, FMRI is retitled the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, FMRI.

2000

USF Department of Marine Science becomes the College of Marine Science.

2001

Peter R. Betzer is named permanent Dean of the USF College of Marine Science (USF CMS).

USF CMS faculty member Frank Muller-Karger is nominated and appointed to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy by President G.W. Bush.

2002

USF College of Marine Science receives a Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) grant from the National Science Foundation.

2003

USF College of Marine Science becomes a member of the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education and the Joint Oceanographic Institutions.

2004

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation, FMRI is renamed to FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. (FWRI).

2005

NOAA establishes operations in St. Pete.

Tampa Bay Watch Marine Education Center in Tierra Verde is dedicated.

2006

SRI International partners with the USF College of Marine Science to begin operations in St. Pete.

USF College of Marine Science receives \$8.5 million grant for advanced instrumentation from the Florida Technology, Research, and Scholarship Board.

2007

Tampa Bay Watch coordinates the largest Salt Marsh Planting in Tampa Bay History at Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve.

History of the Ocean Team and its Member Organizations 1955-2025

2009

St. Pete Ocean Team consortium is formed.

Research Vessel Weatherbird II is purchased.

St. Petersburg College implements a 4- year Baccalaureate Degree in Biology.

2010

St. Pete Ocean Team leads response to the Deep Water Horizon disaster.

St. Pete Ocean Team Economic Impact Analysis is released.

Marine Science Job Creation Summit is held.

2011

USF St. Petersburg Department of Biological Sciences is formed.

USF St. Petersburg Health Sciences program starts.

2012

USF St. Petersburg Biology program starts.

2014

Marine Science is identified in the St. Petersburg Grow Smarter Strategy (economic development plan) as target industry sector.

55 KW Solar Array is installed on Tampa Bay Watch Marine Center.

2015

Sea-grass growth in Tampa Bay is back to 1950s levels.

2016

St. Pete Ocean Team members help found the St. Petersburg Innovation District.

St. Petersburg College implements 2- year Associate Degrees in Biomedical Engineering Technology, Biotechnology Laboratory Technology, and Certificate for Water Quality Technician.

2017

Research Vessel Hogarth is commissioned.

St. Petersburg College expands its Environmental Science Technology Program adding a new natural resources conservation subplan and opportunities for undergraduate research and careers in conservation and water management.

2018

Joint Institute for the Gulf of Mexico studies planning begins.

City of St. Petersburg approves lease to operate Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center at new St. Petersburg Pier.

Tampa Bay Watch celebrates 25 years of restoration and education.

History of the Ocean Team and its Member Organizations 1955-2025

2019

St. Petersburg College implements a Certificate for Medical Equipment Repair and does natural habitat rehabilitation and installation of a living shoreline in Hurricane Hole Lagoon at the Bay Pines. STEM Center is part of the Tampa Bay Estuary's Living Shoreline Project.

USF College of Marine Science launches new "smart city" marine science education program with the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Suncoast.

2020

USF College of Marine Science and NOAA launch a cooperative ocean mapping center - the Center for Ocean Mapping and Innovative Technologies (COMIT).

The City of St. Petersburg contributes \$125,000 to the USF College of Marine Science's "Bridge to the Doctorate" fellowship supporting underrepresented students of color in Marine Science.

2021

USF multi-college team is selected to join the National Science Foundation's All-ABOARD Diversity Program.

St. Petersburg Innovation District establishes the St. Petersburg Maritime and Defense Tech Hub in collaboration with the City of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County.

Local experts from Florida Conservancy for the Ocean Conservancy, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and the College of Marine Science at the University of South Florida tackle the worst red tide outbreak the area has seen in 50 years.

2022

Florida Institute of Oceanography and its host institution, the University of South Florida, acquire the R/V Western Flyer and launch the Peerside Program.

St. Petersburg Innovation District hosts a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the grand opening of the new Maritime and Defense Technology Hub.

Saildrone opens Florida ocean mapping headquarters to support critical coastline initiatives.

Woolpert opens maritime, defense technology and geospatial intelligence office.

NOAA Fisheries hires first female senior leader for regional office.

USF St. Pete launches the Florida Flood Hub for Applied Research and Innovation.

2023

St. Petersburg Innovation District launches a master planning activity for the District.

City of St. Petersburg launches a master planning activity for the Port of St. Pete.

USF achieves Association of American Universities membership.

Saildrone and NOAA deploy five Explorer uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) from St. Petersburg to study hurricanes and tropical storms.

History of the Ocean Team and its Member Organizations 1955-2025

2024

St. Petersburg Innovation District, USF Research and Innovation and College of Marine Science, and Tampa Bay Wave partner and are awarded NOAA's Phase 1 Ocean Enterprise Accelerator program to foster sustainable marine-based business models and address climate.

St. Petersburg Innovation District, USF, Tampa Bay Wave join with Braid Theory, Ocean Exchange, Seaworthy Collective and World Ocean Council as The Continuum and are awarded NOAA's Phase 2 Ocean Enterprise Accelerator program.

2025

USF College of Marine Science and USF School of Geosciences deploy tsunami-sensing buoy, aiding future warning system.

The Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) partners with DEEP, an international design and engineering organization that is working to make the marine environment more habitable for humans by establishing subsea stations.

USF College of Marine Science has identified a "tipping point" in atmospheric conditions that caused the formation of a floating seaweed mass once visible from space.

USF College of Marine Science identifies viruses in red tide blooms for the first time.

The St. Pete Ocean Team renames itself as the Tampa Bay Ocean Team as collaboration in writing a Tampa Bay Ocean Economy Strategy begins.

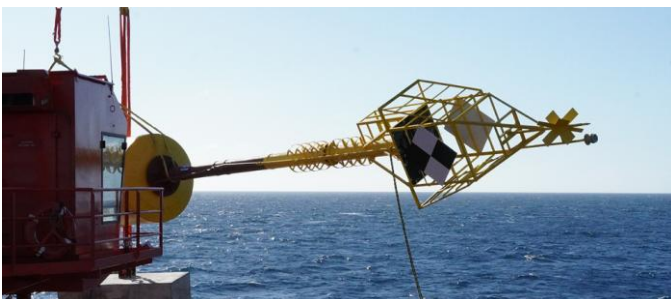


Photo credits (top to bottom, left to right): FIO, FWRI, SPID, FWRI, USF