

# The Tampa Bay Ocean Strategy

The Tampa Bay region is powered by robust, organically driven economic growth rooted in the ocean economy and propelled by a dynamic network of government, academic, private sector, and nonprofit partners. Nationally aligned yet regionally focused, the Tampa Bay Ocean Strategy identifies the best ways to leverage and expand the intellectual, community, and physical infrastructure already in place, ensuring its relevance and impact far beyond the region and into the future.

As recognition of the ocean economy's importance grows across Florida—highlighted by initiatives such as the establishment of the Office of Ocean Economy—our region's unique contributions can drive transformative economic and environmental outcomes.

Now is the ideal time to act, given the alignment of federal priorities such as maritime prosperity zones and the growing maturity of new technologies in the ocean economy. By amplifying innovation, economic growth, and coastal resilience, this strategy can help the region reach its full potential.

## Geography

The Tampa Bay region, for the purposes of the Ocean Strategy, is defined by the three counties of Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Manatee counties. Each of these three counties directly touches Tampa Bay, has a seaport, and possesses concentrated assets that support the ocean economy.

## About Tampa Bay Ocean Team

The Tampa Bay Ocean Strategy was authored by members of the Tampa Bay Ocean Team. The Ocean Team, formed in 2009, is the premier consortium for complementary private industry, government entities, research institutions, and nonprofits in the Southeast.

## Metrics of the Ocean Economy

Together Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Manatee counties are fueled by substantial, organically driven economic growth from the ocean economy.



## Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Manatee Counties

**2,797,172**

Combined Population

**4,262**

Marine economy  
businesses

**92,566**

Employees of marine  
businesses

**\$3.2 B**

Wages generated by  
marine businesses

**\$6.1 B**

Contribution to  
region's GDP by  
marine businesses

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## To learn more



## 8 Focus Areas

The Tampa Bay Ocean Strategy focuses on eight areas that create a comprehensive framework to grow the region's ocean economy while protecting its natural and built assets. Together, these focus areas create a strategic, balanced approach that integrates economic development, scientific advancement, workforce growth, and environmental preparedness for Tampa Bay. Each focus area highlights the region's existing assets and future opportunities for transformation.

1



### Unify Regional Strategic Collaboration

The Tampa Bay region has had historical success aligning the triple helix of innovation—academic research, industry expertise, and public policy—to unlock the potential of its ocean economy. There is significant opportunity to increase this economic impact by expanding stakeholder engagement, avoiding duplication, and fully leveraging unique assets through sustained, collaborative efforts.

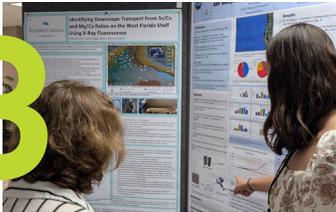
2



### Catalyze High-Impact Research

The Tampa Bay region is home to groundbreaking research recognized both locally and globally for its profound impact. Continuing to catalyze this high-impact research positions Tampa Bay as a hub for scientific discovery and technological advancement, generating knowledge that can inform policy, industry practices, and environmental stewardship.

3



### Expand High-Quality Jobs

The Tampa Bay region has a strong pipeline of academic institutions—from high schools to universities—actively shaping and preparing the next generation for the ocean economy. There continues to be a need for traditional marine skills and new, technology-focused competencies. Focusing on expanding high-quality jobs—those with stability, financial security, and opportunities for growth—ensures that economic growth benefits the local workforce, providing opportunities in sectors such as marine technology, shipping, and sustainable fisheries.

4



### Accelerate Innovation

The Tampa Bay region has established programs that incubate startups, recruit new businesses, and grow existing businesses. While their services are broadly applicable across industries, accelerating innovation could hinge on developing targeted, industry-specific capabilities. In turn, this supports the development and commercialization of cutting-edge ocean technologies, enhancing competitiveness and attracting investment to the region.

5



### Facilitate Dual-Use Capabilities

The Tampa Bay region is uniquely positioned with access to key National Defense and Coast Guard assets both locally and nationally. As innovation accelerates across existing and emerging businesses, prioritization of dual-use opportunities will be critical. These opportunities span research and development, product development, investment, and scaling, and will position the region as a place where defense-driven innovation drives economic growth and strategic advantage.

6



### Invest In Critical Marine Infrastructure

The Tampa Bay region depends on vital infrastructure—ports, shipyards, and research facilities—that serve as the backbone of regional growth. Yet, these critical assets face mounting risks from cyber threats, aging systems, and declining capacity. Strategic investment to expand, modernize, and secure this infrastructure is essential to sustaining and strengthening the region's maritime future.

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### Enhance Coastal Resilience

As a coastal region, Tampa Bay faces growing threats from extreme weather and environmental challenges. Protecting the region's communities through thoughtful policies and urban development isn't just a matter of safety, it's a smart economic strategy that safeguards the region's future prosperity.

8



### Advance the Ocean and Human Health Connection

The Tampa Bay region thrives because of stunning beaches and vibrant waterways that shape how residents live, work, and play. The health of the waterways and community members are inseparable. Understanding the connection between ocean and human health in circumstances such as harmful algae blooms, environmental toxins, and extreme heat can assist in developing future medical treatments, programs, and policies.