

MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #IV.C

DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: STAFF

SUBJECT: SFRPC / TCRPC BLUE TECH CONFERENCE

Please find attached an updated Draft Agenda for the upcoming SFRPC / TCRPC Blue Tech Jobs: Policy, Investment, and Workforce Development in Southeast Florida Conference.

This Conference is scheduled for October 30th at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Mary N. Porter Riverview Ballroom, 201 SW 5th Avenue, in Fort Lauderdale.

Recommendation:

Information only.



DRAFT

Blue Tech Jobs: Policy, Investment, and Workforce Development in Southeast Florida

A Joint Conference of the South Florida Regional Planning Council and

the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

Friday, October 30, 2026

Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Mary N. Porter Riverview Ballroom

201 SW 5th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312

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Conference Goals:

- *Demonstrate to local officials and other regional stakeholders the potential for, and the challenges faced by Blue Tech*
- *Explore different ways of supporting Blue Tech through land use and regulation, workforce systems, commercialization, demonstration projects, and innovative partnerships*
- *Spark a broader conversation about the Blue Tech economy and support its expansion in Southeast Florida through the identification of implementable next steps*

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Registration and Networking

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. Welcome and Conference Framing

Opening remarks on why Blue Tech matters to Southeast Florida's ocean economy, workforce strategy, and joint regional economic development priorities.

- **The Honorable Senator René García**, Chair, SFRPC; Miami-Dade County Commissioner, District 13
- **The Honorable Maria Marino**, Chair, TCRPC; Palm Beach County Commissioner, District 1
- **The Honorable Senator Steve Geller**, SFRPC Council Member and Chair, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (CEDS); Broward County Commissioner, District 1

9:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Blue Tech Implementation Overview

Brief presentation connecting the CEDS process to the Blue Tech Jobs agenda, defining and framing Blue Tech as the innovation layer of the regional ocean economy, identifying the implementation questions for the day, and summarizing the local government survey.

- **Randy Deshazo, MA, MU**, Deputy Director and Director of Economic Development and Research, South Florida Regional Planning Council

9:30 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. Panel 1: What Blue Tech Companies do in Southeast Florida

This panel will showcase Blue Tech through company examples rather than abstract definitions. The focus will be on local firms, products, services, and technologies. Speakers will explain what they build, who buys it, how it helps ports, local governments, coastal managers, researchers, or private industry, and where public sector involvement may be useful.

Speakers:

- **Moderator:** **Bob Swindell**, President and CEO, Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance; Chairman, Marine Research Hub Board
- **Nick Bourdon**, Co-Founder, Reef Arches
- **Tom Potts**, Program Director - DSF Science, DEEP
- **Bonnie Schneider**, Co-Founder, SkyWind Solutions
- **Alexander “Sandy” Spaulding**, Senior Vice President, Blue Ops, Inc.

10:25 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. Networking Break

10:40 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Panel 2: Workforce, Credentials, and Employer Commitments

Focus on the workforce systems needed to support Blue Tech job growth. Topics will include credentials, apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, employer commitments, university and college pathways, and workforce board programs.

Speakers:

- **Moderator:** **Harry K. Moon, MD**, President, Nova Southeastern University
- **Jim Allen**, Chief Executive Officer, Chapman School of Seamanship
- **Terri-Ann Brown**, Senior Director, Miami Tech Works
- **Colin Polsky, PhD**, Associate Vice President, Broward Campuses, Professor of Geosciences, Florida Atlantic University
- **Brittany Snyder, DM**, Interim President and CEO, The College of the Florida Keys
- **Glenn A. Wiltshire**, Deputy Director, Port Everglades

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch and Keynote

- *11:30 - 11:45 a.m., Short Break and Grab Boxed Lunches*
 - *11:45 a.m. – 12:10 p.m. **The Honorable Daniella Levine Cava**, Mayor, Miami-Dade County (invited)*
 - *12:10 p.m. – 12:55 p.m. **Captain Rick Miller**, U.S. Navy (ret.), Executive Director, South Florida Defense Alliance*
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1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Panel 3: Regulatory Pathways, Permitting, and Local Government Tools

This panel will examine the regulatory and land use tools that help Blue Tech companies test, deploy, and scale technologies in Southeast Florida. Topics may include permitting pathways, pilot deployment zones, temporary approvals, flexible zoning, model ordinance concepts, and lessons from the St. Petersburg Innovation District or similar models.

Speakers:

- **Moderator: James Kohnstamm, CEcd**, Director of Economic Development, Miami-Dade County
- **Jonathan Brown**, Assistant County Administrator, Palm Beach County (invited)
- **The Honorable Chip LaMarca**, State Representative, 100th District
- **Philip R. McChesney, MSW**, Director and Deputy Chief Innovation Officer, Broward County
- **Loren Parra, MBA**, Director and Chief Resilience Officer, Department of Environmental Resources Management, Miami-Dade County
- **Chris Roschek, PE**, Chief Resiliency Officer, City of Hollywood

2:00 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. Panel 4: Research, Commercialization, and Capital

This panel will be framed as research-to-market and commercialization. Topics may include university research, commercialization pathways, port or local government demonstration projects, corporate partnerships, federal and state funding, venture capital, and what makes a Blue Tech company investable or bankable.

Speakers:

- **Moderator: Katherine O'Fallon**, Executive Director, Marine Research Hub
 - **Michael Burtov**, Chief Innovation Officer and Executive Director, Alan B. Levan | NSU Broward Center of Innovation
 - **Daniel Kleinman**, Founder and CEO, Seaworthy Collective
 - **Mark Volchek**, Principal & Founder, Las Olas Venture Capital
 - **Dr. Steven Vollmer**, Director, School of Environmental Coastal Ocean Sustainability, Florida Atlantic University
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2:55 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Implementation Discussion and Next Steps

A closing session that identifies the next practical steps from the conference. Possible outputs include a Blue Tech policy blueprint, candidate pilot project areas, and workforce action items.

Speakers:

- **Isabel Cosio Carballo, MPA**, Executive Director, South Florida Regional Planning Council
- **Thomas Lanahan**, Executive Director, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Closing Remarks

3:30 p.m. Adjourn