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

Est. 1974 SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

treasure coast regional planning council 50 bringing communities together since 1976
tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach



THANK YOU TO OUR SILVER SPONSORS

greater fort lauderdale alliance | broward county

marine research HUB Since 2017

BROWARD COUNTY FLORIDA

Welcome



The Honorable René García

Chair, SFRPC

Miami-Dade County Commissioner, District 13

Thank You To Our Silver Sponsors!

BROWARD COUNTY FLORIDA

greater fort lauderdale alliance | broward county
Life. Less taxing.

marine research HUB
Since 2017

SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach

Thank You To Our Bronze Sponsor!

BRIZAGA

Thank You To Our Partner!



Housekeeping Items:

- Bios and CEDS Report: Scan the QR codes on the agenda.
- Presentations: Will be posted on the SFRPC website after the event.
- AICP Credits: Sign-in sheets for 4.5 hrs. CM are available at the registration desk.
- Speaker Questions: Staff will be available with a microphone for questions from the audience at the end of each session.

Welcome



The Honorable Maria Marino

Chair, TCRPC

Palm Beach County Commissioner, District 1

Welcome



The Honorable Steve Geller

SFRPC Council Member & Chair, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee;

Broward County Commissioner, District 5

Regional Overview



Randy Deshazo, MA, MUP

Deputy Director & Director of Economic Development

South Florida Regional Planning Council

BLUE TECH JOBS OVERVIEW

From Research to Commercial Deployment

Randy Deshazo, Deputy Director, and Director of Economic Development and Research

South Florida Regional Planning Council | October 30, 2026







Blue Tech: technologies that support work in the ocean, efficiently draw resources from it, or provide for the sustainability of those resources

Technology and innovation for ocean-facing industries across 9 sectors

01 Ocean observation & water quality	02 Autonomous marine systems	03 Marine renewable energy
04 Aquaculture & seafood technology	05 Marine pharmaceuticals & biotech	06 Coral & ecosystem restoration
07 Resilient coastal infrastructure	08 Marine manufacturing & clean vessels	09 Marine data & software

Defense applications cut through many of these sectors

Source: SFRPC, Blue Tech in South Florida, Oct. 2026, Table 1.

Southeast Florida's research, testing, and port assets

RESEARCH AND FIELD FACILITIES

UM Rosenstiel School • NOAA AOML • NOAA SEFSC Miami Laboratory • FAU SeaTech • FAU Harbor Branch • Smithsonian Marine Station • Mote coral reef center, Summerland Key • FWC research lab, Marathon

MARINE TESTING

FIU Aquarius Reef Base • NSU Oceanographic Campus • Keys Marine Laboratory • UM SUSTAIN wind-wave tank • UM Experimental Hatchery • FAU Harbor Branch Aquapark • Navy South Florida Ocean Measurement Facility (military access)

WATERFRONT

PortMiami • Port Everglades • Port of Palm Beach • Port of Fort Pierce • Port of Key West • Working waterfront on the lower Miami River, New River and Stock Island

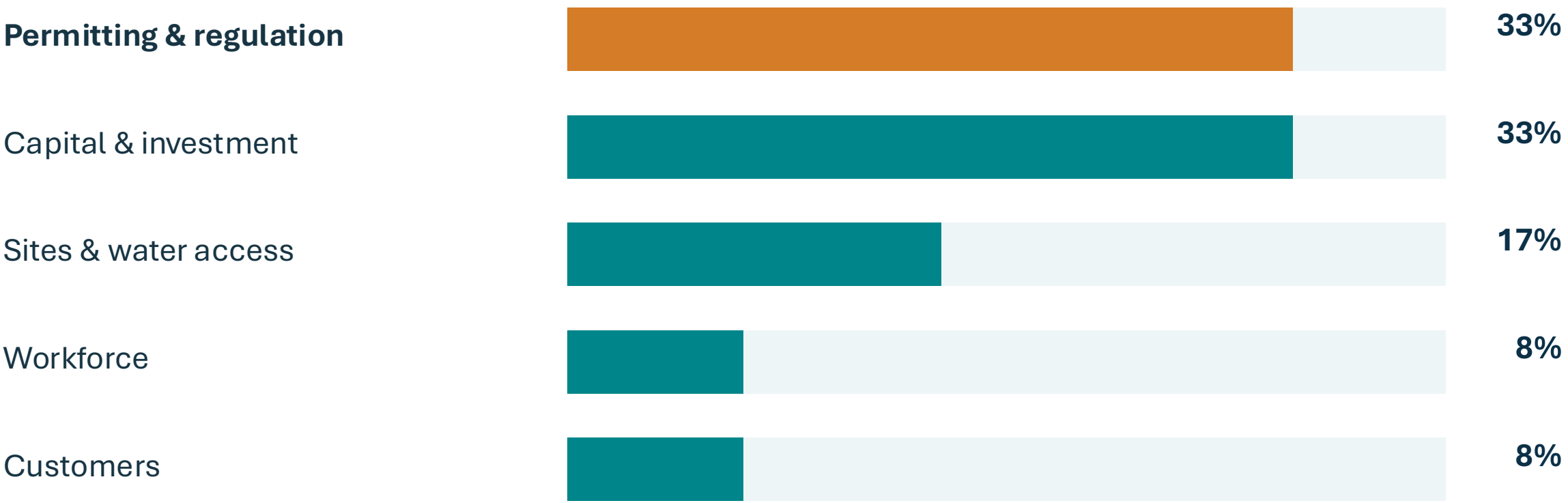
PARTNERS

Marine Research Hub • Florida Office of Ocean Economy (FAU) • Risk and Resilience Tech Hub • Miami-Dade Innovation Authority • Marine Industries Associations of South Florida and Palm Beach County • Florida Oceanographic Society • Chapman School of Seamanship

How can firms, research institutions and local governments turn these assets into more Blue Tech jobs here?

Sources: UM, NOAA AOML and SEFSC, FAU, FIU, NSU, FIO/USF, Smithsonian, Mote, FWC, NAVSEA and port websites; EDA; Miami-Dade Beacon Council (Nov. 2017); BlueTech Site Finder (Oct. 2026).

Blue Tech firms say permitting and capital are tied as the largest barriers



Designed and distributed with the help of the Marine Research Hub. Survey sent to 40 firms; 12 (30%) responded. Caveat lector.

Source: SFRPC firm survey, July 29–Oct. 1, 2026; n=12.

Workspace costs and permitting review delays are obstacles



Source: SFRPC firm survey, July 29–Oct. 1, 2026; respondents per item vary.

Approvals extend beyond local government

Approvals sought or expected. Percentage of firms. Select all that apply. n = 12.



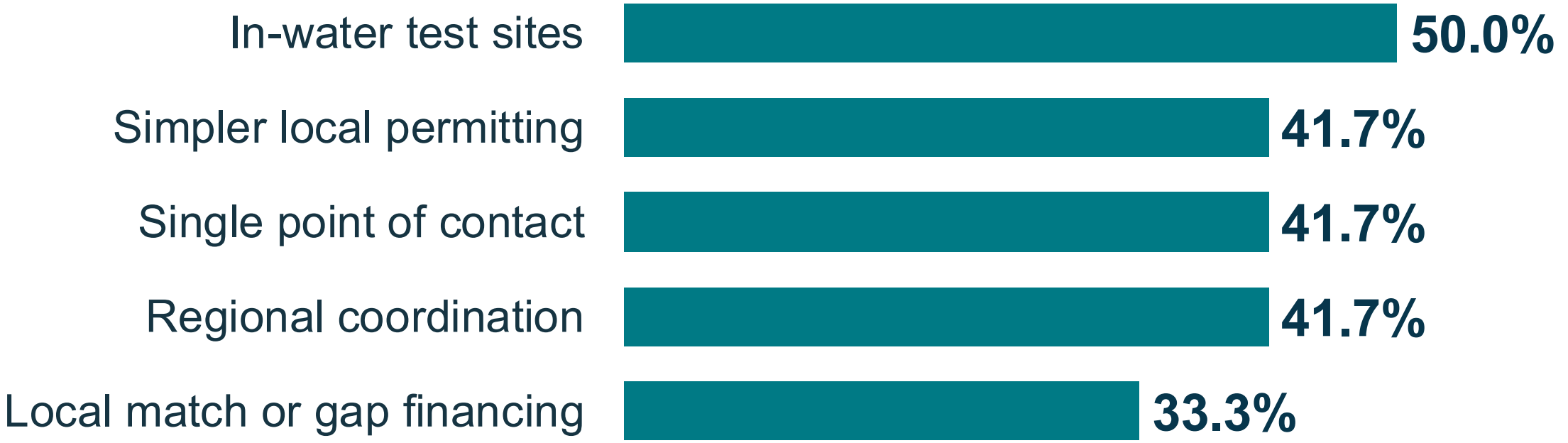
A designated contact can coordinate the full approval path.

July 29–Oct. 1, 2026. 12 responses from 40 firms. Response rate: 30%.

Source: SFRPC survey response workbook, responses 1–12. Shares = counts ÷ 12.

Test sites lead firms' priorities

Priority actions. Percentage of respondents. Up to three choices. n = 12.



Test sites lead at 50.0%. Three actions tie at 41.7%.

July 29–Oct. 1, 2026. 12 responses from 40 firms. Response rate: 30%.

Source: SFRPC survey response workbook, responses 1–12. Shares = counts ÷ 12.

Three peer regions use three distinct operating models

SAN DIEGO

PORT-LED PILOTS

Funding, port test sites, permitting assistance, and market connections.

BOSTON

VENTURE INCUBATION

Mentors, product-market fit, finance, and customer introductions.

LOS ANGELES

SHARED WATERFRONT CAMPUS

Shared waterfront workspace, tenant laboratories, and dock access.

Leaders brought large anchors together to commit funding and facilities and share early risks. They gave firms practical reasons to join through access to customers, capital, expertise, and testing space. They also asked partners to contribute mentoring, internships, and technical exchanges.

Sources: Port of San Diego (July 2026); SeaAhead/BlueSwell (2026); AltaSea (2026).

St. Petersburg: the Innovation District and its assets

ECONOMIC ASSETS

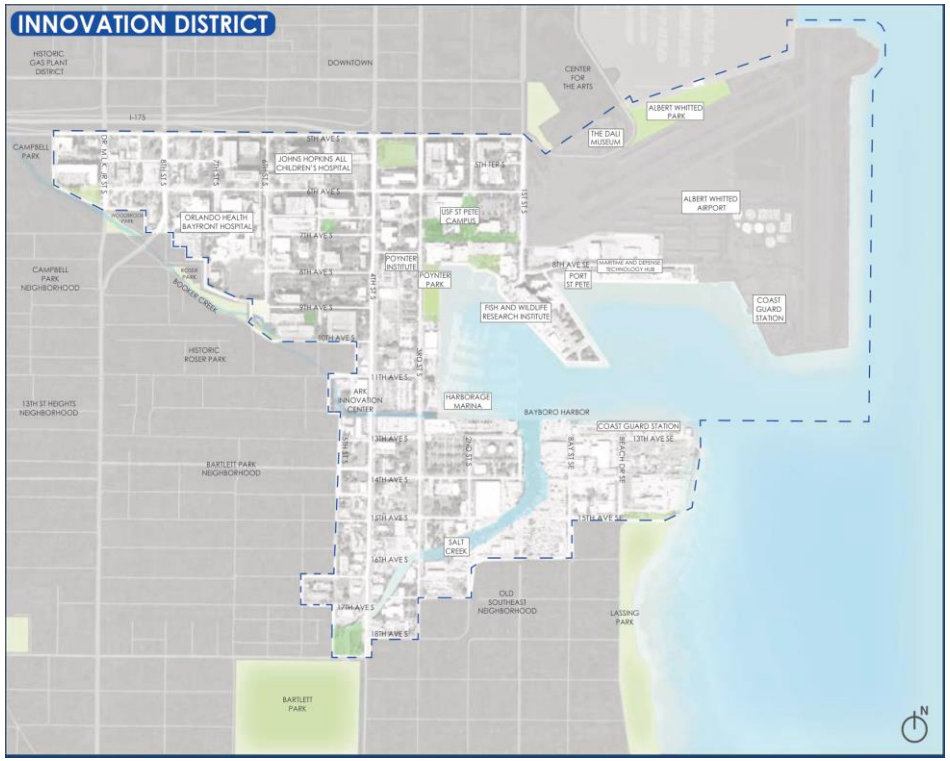
Anchor firms, research institutions, startups

PHYSICAL ASSETS

Labs, waterfront, port and research space

NETWORKING ASSETS

Working groups, partnerships and a trusted intermediary



The Maritime and Defense Technology Hub provides shared marine technology space within the district.

Sources: Alison Barlow, SPID, interview (Oct. 2026); SPID About; SFRPC report, pp. 8–9.

How the St. Pete Innovation District organizes collaboration

ANCHORS

Contribute funding, technical capacity, and strategic needs.

NONPROFIT OPERATOR

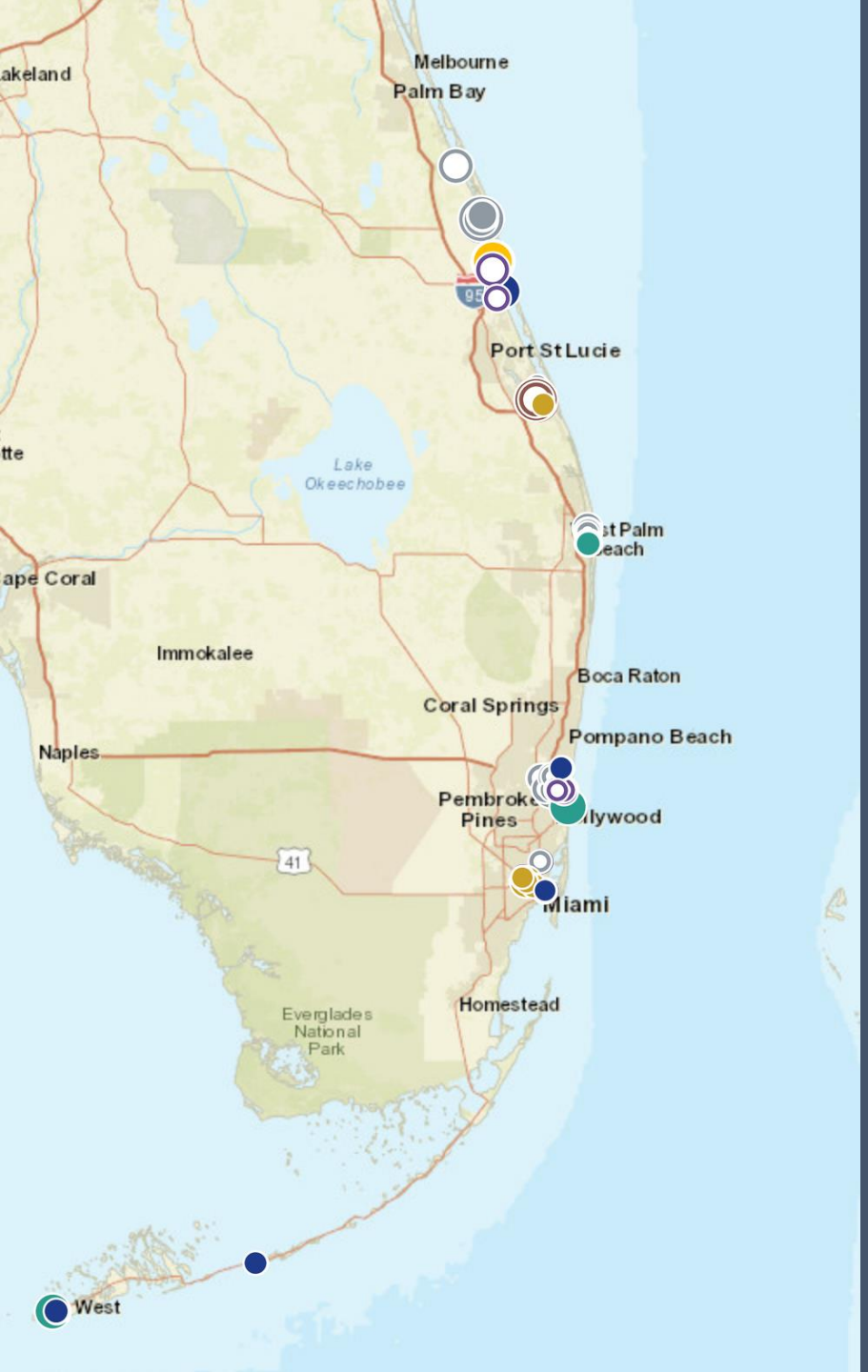
Dedicated staff convene institutions and manage projects.

PUBLIC PARTNERS

Provide property, infrastructure, and local support.

60+ **organizations in the Tampa Bay Ocean Team network (district count)**

Sources: Alison Barlow (2026); SPID Ocean Team; SFRPC report.



Where can our Blue Tech industry grow?

Potential locations for shared facilities and pilots across seven counties. Candidate sites require further review.

66
candidate parcels in 7 counties

306.7
total acres

132.1
acres waterfront · 32 parcels

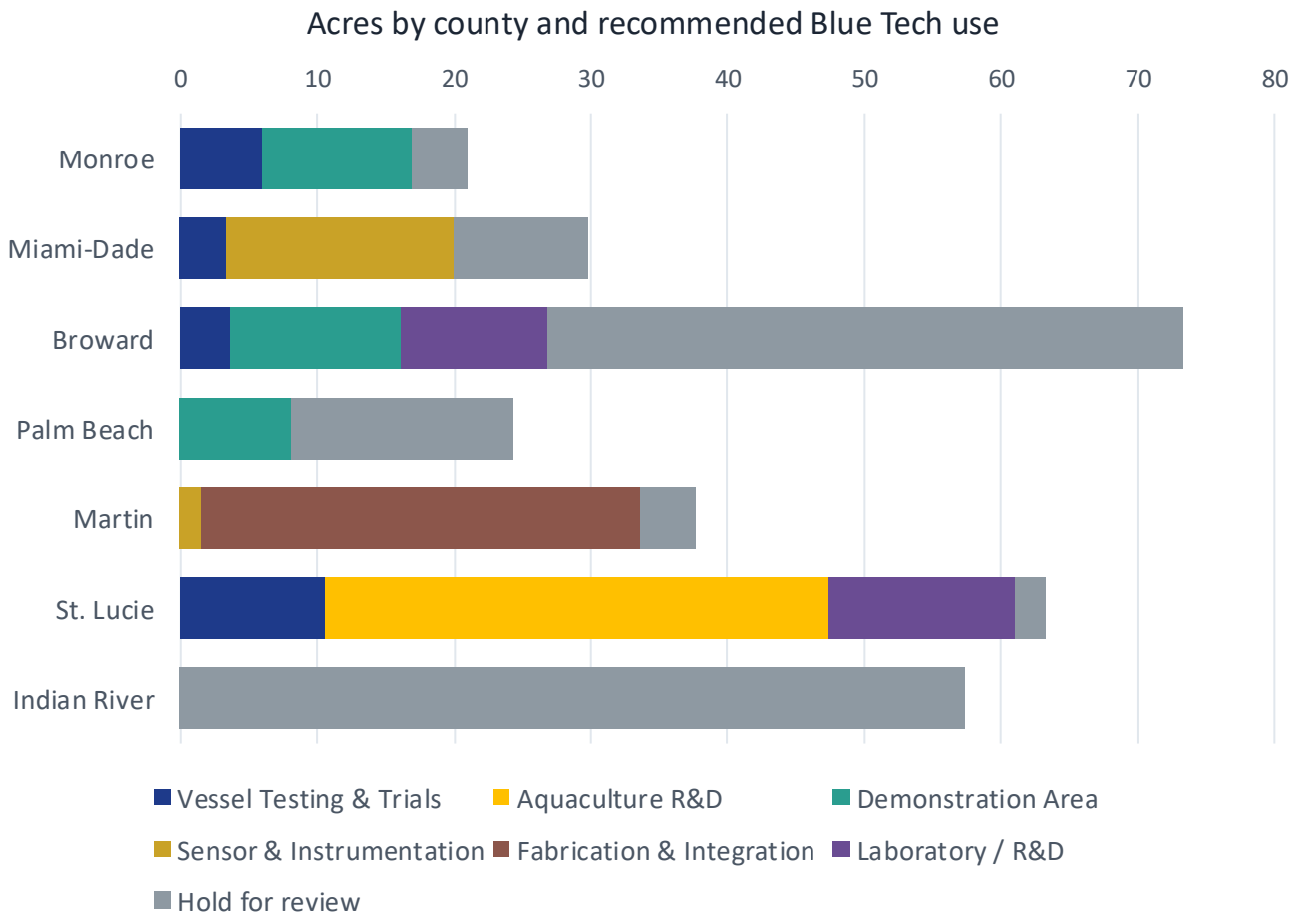
174.6
acres non-waterfront · 34 parcels

- Vessel Testing & Trials
- Aquaculture R&D
- Demonstration Area
- Sensor & Instrumentation
- Fabrication & Integration
- Laboratory / R&D
- Hold for review

Hollow markers = no navigable water at the edge; size = acreage. Basemap © Esri.

Preliminary screening of potential uses by parcel

Using the revised decision tree in the appendix



Vessel Testing & Trials — **23.4 ac**
8 parcels · waterfront · 4 counties

Aquaculture R&D — **36.9 ac**
2 parcels · waterfront · St. Lucie

Demonstration Area — **31.5 ac**
5 parcels · waterfront · most in Palm Beach

Sensor & Instrumentation — **18.2 ac**
8 parcels · waterfront · most on the Miami River

Fabrication & Integration — **32.1 ac**
2 parcels · upland · Martin

Laboratory / R&D — **24.4 ac**
6 parcels · upland · Dania Beach and Fort Pierce

Hold for review — **140.3 ac**
35 parcels · 16 on residential use codes

Source: DOR tax roll (FL DOH parcels service); BlueTech Site Finder, 66 parcels, Oct. 2026; conservation lands excluded (FNAI FLMA). Water access/depth: NOAA CUDEM + NOAA ENC charts, screening grade; uses decision tree on slide 14, applied Oct. 24, 2026; zoning tested with tax-roll use codes.

Regulatory tools for testing and facilities

Public agency pilot agreements	Miami-Dade: I.O. 3-38 pilot agreements (12-month limit); MDIA challenge pilots at South Dade Landfill.
Permitted research uses	St. Petersburg: EC-2 names R&D and marine and life sciences as intended uses and gives labs and R&D a 2.0 FAR bonus. Innovation District master plan proposes new zoning overlays (not adopted).
Research use approvals	Fort Pierce permits marine research and education in an industrial district. Lake Worth Beach allows R&D and marine research as administrative or conditional uses.
Preservation incentives	Monroe County: Maximum residential density without TDRs when 50% of Maritime Industries upland stays working waterfront.
Marine site-design rules	City of Miami: Miami River marine industry is exempt from waterfront setbacks; structures may span man-made slips in D1 to D3 zones.

Sources: SFRPC Blue Tech report, Oct. 7, 2026; Miami-Dade releases (Feb. 6 and June 3, 2026) and I.O. 3-38 memo; St. Petersburg LDR Sec. 16.20.130; St. Pete Innovation District master plan (Jan. 2026); Fort Pierce Sec. 125-187; Lake Worth Beach LDR Sec. 23.3-6; Monroe County Comp. Plan Policy 101.5.6; Miami 21 Sec. 3.11 (Ord. 13804)

Five priorities for local and regional action

Pilot demonstration permits	Define eligible pilot uses, time limits, review steps and operating conditions.
Public sites and a navigator	Host repeat pilots, purchase pilot services and provide one contact to coordinate reviews.
Waterfront land-use rules	Clarify research, testing and marine production uses. Preserve working waterfronts.
Nonprofit operators	Set funding, access and maintenance rules. Include hiring and internships.
Regional network of sites	Connect specialized sites under a regional brand. Retain local governance and shared workforce programs. Recruit industry champions.

CEDS provides a framework for implementation

REGIONAL COORDINATION

The regional planning councils convene public, private and institutional partners to agree on economic priorities.

SFRPC: Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe.
TCRPC: Indian River, Martin, Palm Beach, St. Lucie.

IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH CEDS

Identify a lead organization for each action. Agree on partners, milestones and measurable outcomes.

- Use the annual update to track progress.
- Carry priorities into the 2027–2032 strategy.
- EDA can fund specific kinds of projects; applications have no fixed deadline.

A Blue Tech CEDS action needs an owner and measurable outcomes.

Source: EDA, 13 C.F.R. parts 303–304; SFRPC 2025 CEDS Annual Report; Oct. 2026 draft report.

Questions?

Thank you!

Randy Deshazo
Deputy Director and Director of Economic Development and Research
South Florida Regional Planning Council
rdeshazo@sfrpc.com

Next Up

Panel 1: What do Blue Tech companies do in Southeast Florida?



Q&A

Regional Overview

What Blue Tech Companies Do in Southeast Florida



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
CEO & Co-Founder
SkyWind Solutions



Alexander Spaulding
Senior Vice President
Blue Ops, Inc.

SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach

REEF ARCHES

nick@reefarches.com





Reef Arches is REALLY Fast Install

Reef Arches is used by

- United States Military
- Alabama Coastal Engineers
- Mississippi Coastal Engineers
- Florida State Government
- Local Governments
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Universities

Reef Arches installed by:

- Barge
- Crane
- Forklift
- and more!

Stacks Like PRINGLES
Connects like LEGOS



Efficient Barge Deployment



REEF ARCHES

Anyone Can Start Making A Difference!

How? Call A Marine Contractor!

- Matches RipRap requirements
- Installed in 2 hours
- Add Dock Lights for added nightlife

REEF ARCHES **nick@reefarches.com**



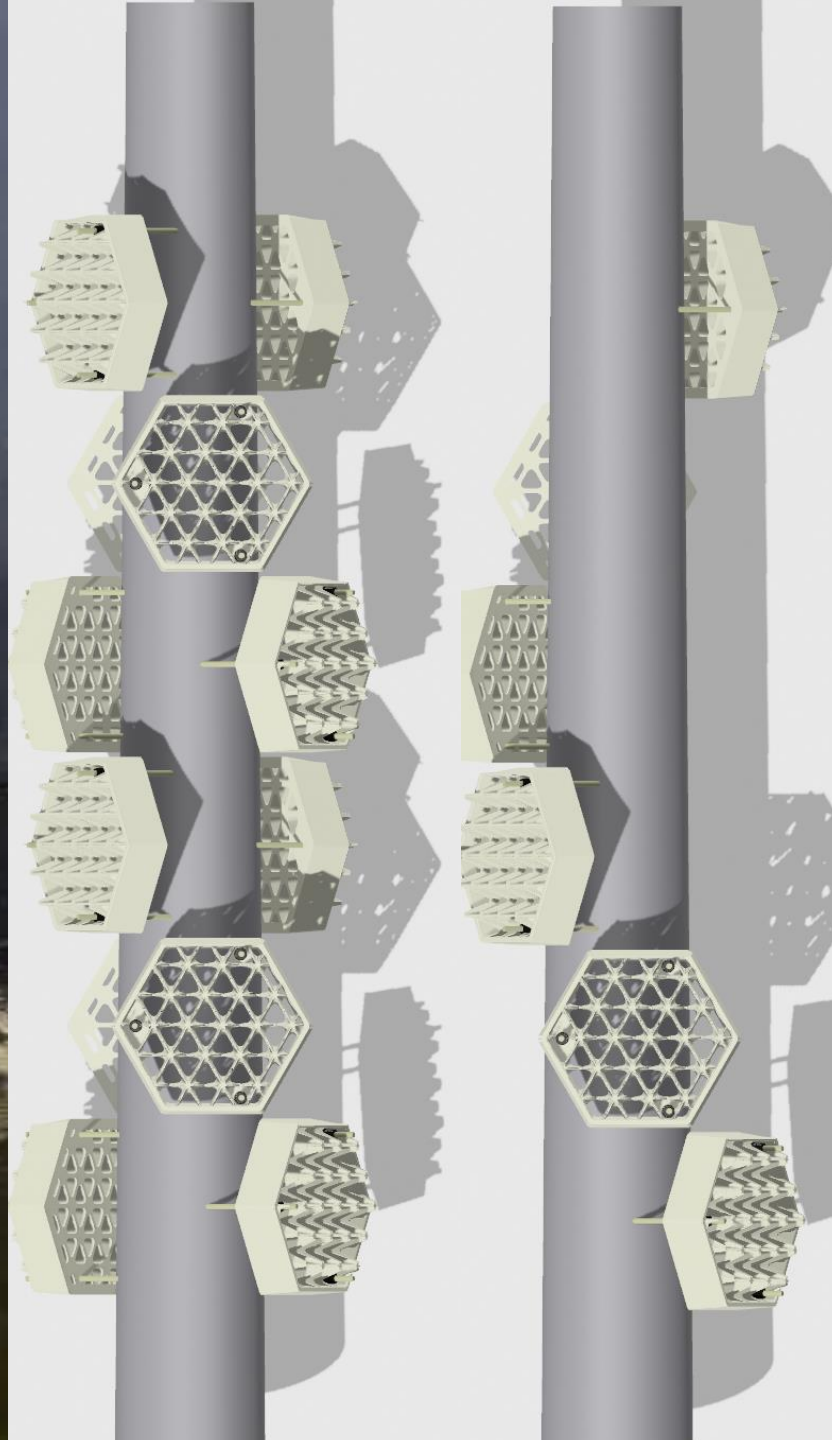
REEF ARCHES

Anyone Can Start Making A Difference!

How? Call A Marine Contractor!

- No Permit Required
- Installed in a day
- Immediate habitat for:
  - Corals, Fish, Sponges!



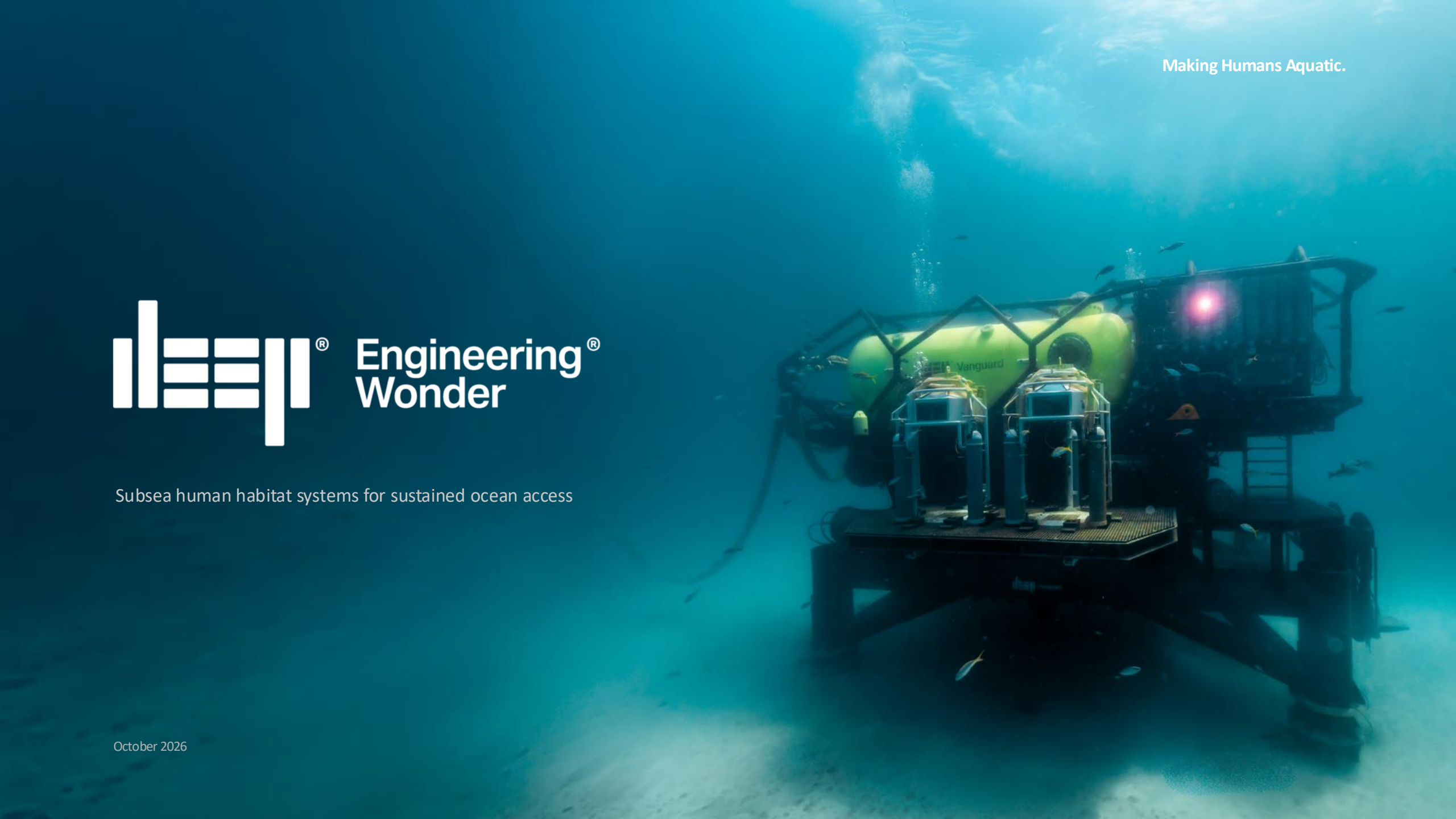


REEF ARCHES **nick@reefarches.com**

Making Humans Aquatic.

Engineering® Wonder

Subsea human habitat systems for sustained ocean access



October 2026

Built Here. Operating Here.



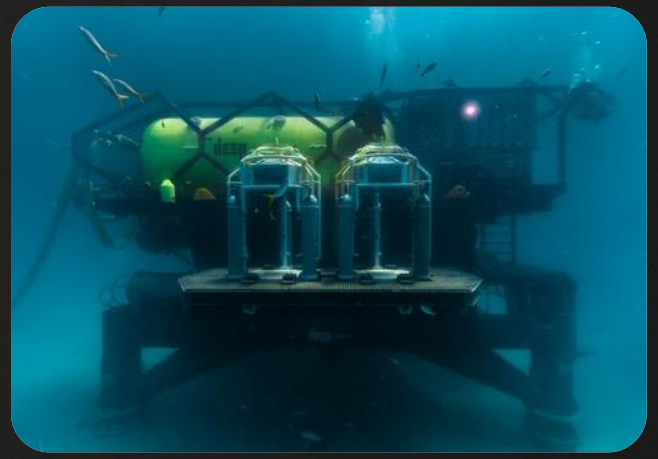
DEEP Station Florida

Marathon serves as the base for habitat operations and engineering teams.



Tennessee Reef

Vanguard is deployed in 17 meters of water in an FKNMS-designated conservation area.



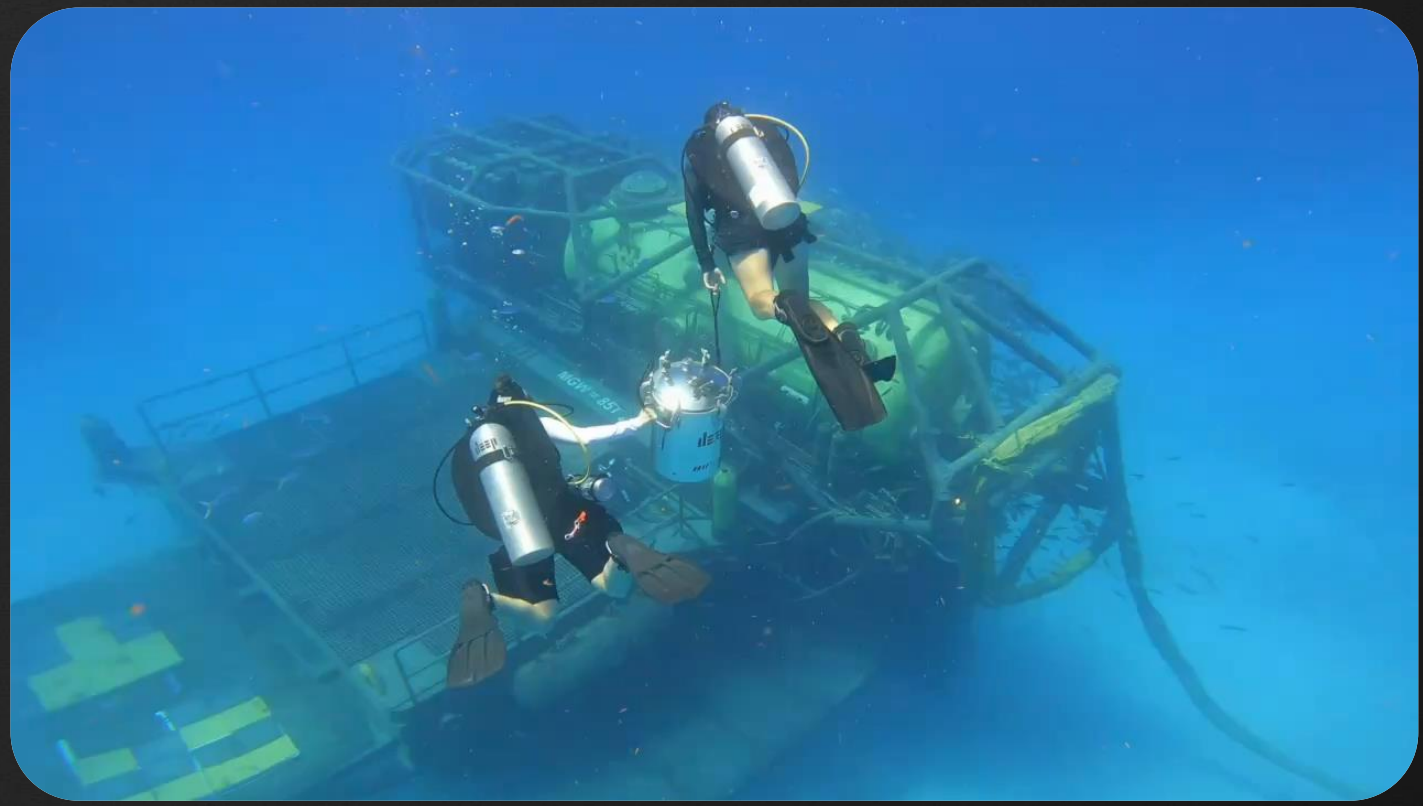
Vanguard

DEEP's subsea human habitat supports up to four aquanauts on extended missions for science, tech development, training and education.

4 aquanauts | multi-day missions | sustained access

What Does Sustained Access Change?

- Science
- **Restoration**
- **Monitoring**
- **Robotics**
- **Human Performance**



A conventional dive gives us a snapshot. Sustained presence gives us a movie.

A Platform for Florida’s Blue Economy



Universities & Researchers
Research + Discovery

Government & Resource Managers
Restoration + Monitoring + Resilience

Ports & Maritime
Inspection + Technology Validation

Industry
Robotics + Sensors + Engineering

Workforce
Training + High-skill Jobs

skywind SOLUTIONS

Hyperlocal weather intelligence for **high-stakes decision-making**

OCTOBER 2026

THE TEAM

Meet the Team



Bonnie Schneider

CEO + Co-Founder

CNN

Bloomberg TELEVISION

SIMON & SCHUSTER

THE WEATHER CHANNEL



Daniel Hodyss, PhD

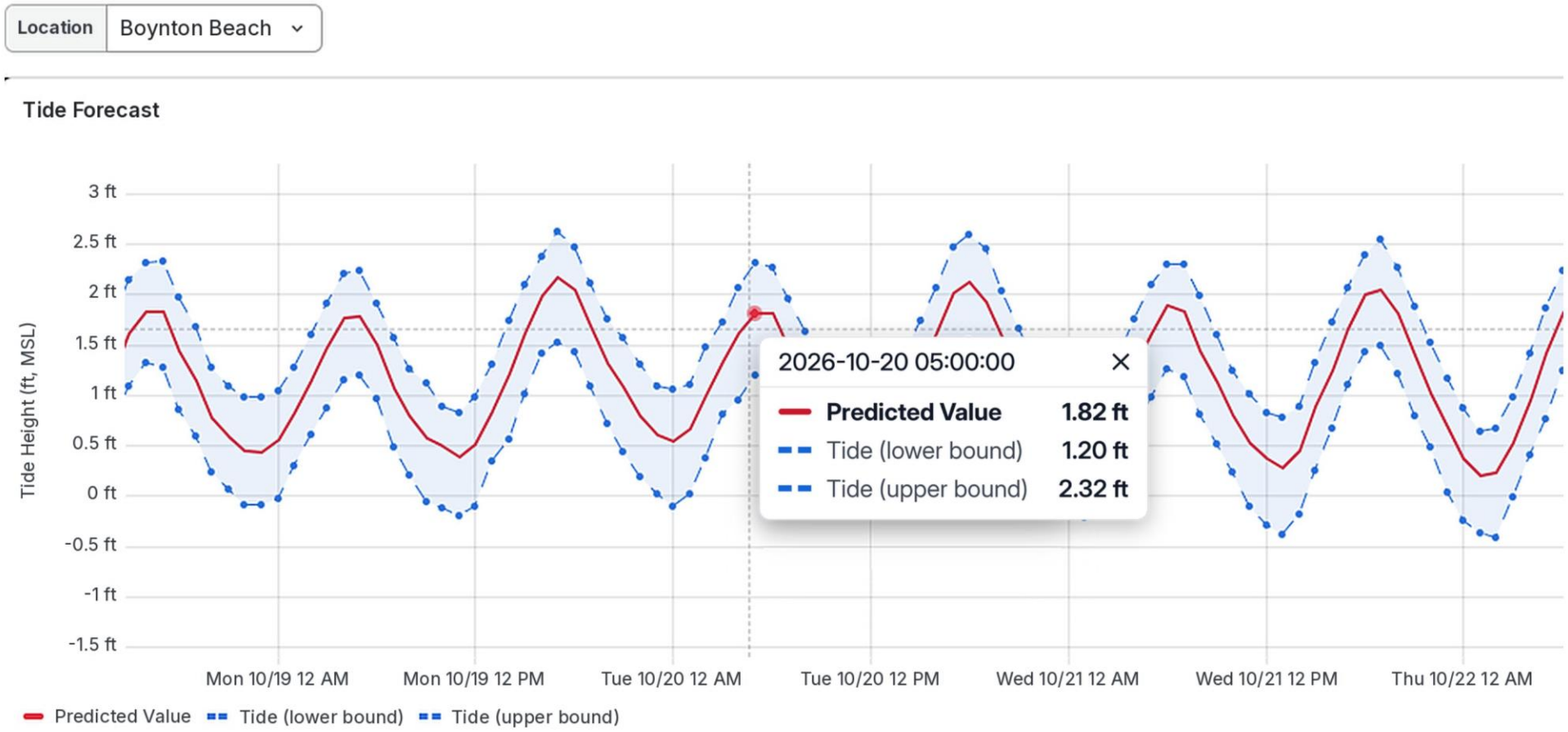
CTO + Co-Founder

NAVAL RESEARCH LABORATORY WASHINGTON, DC

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DAVIS LET THERE BE LIGHT

PRODUCT SAMPLE · HYPERLOCAL TIDE FORECAST

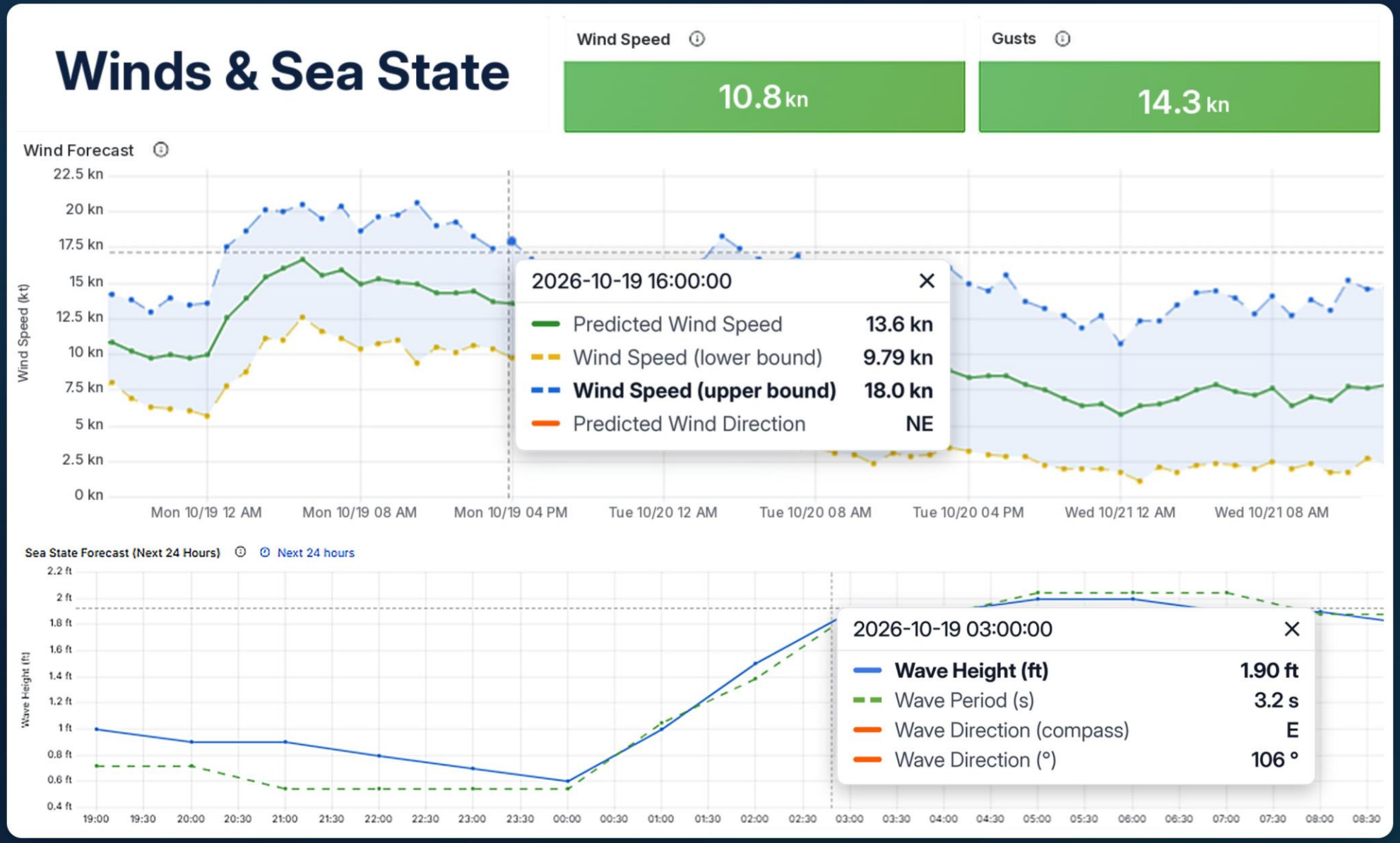
Coastal Communities



Site-calibrated forecasts with predicted values and 90% confidence intervals

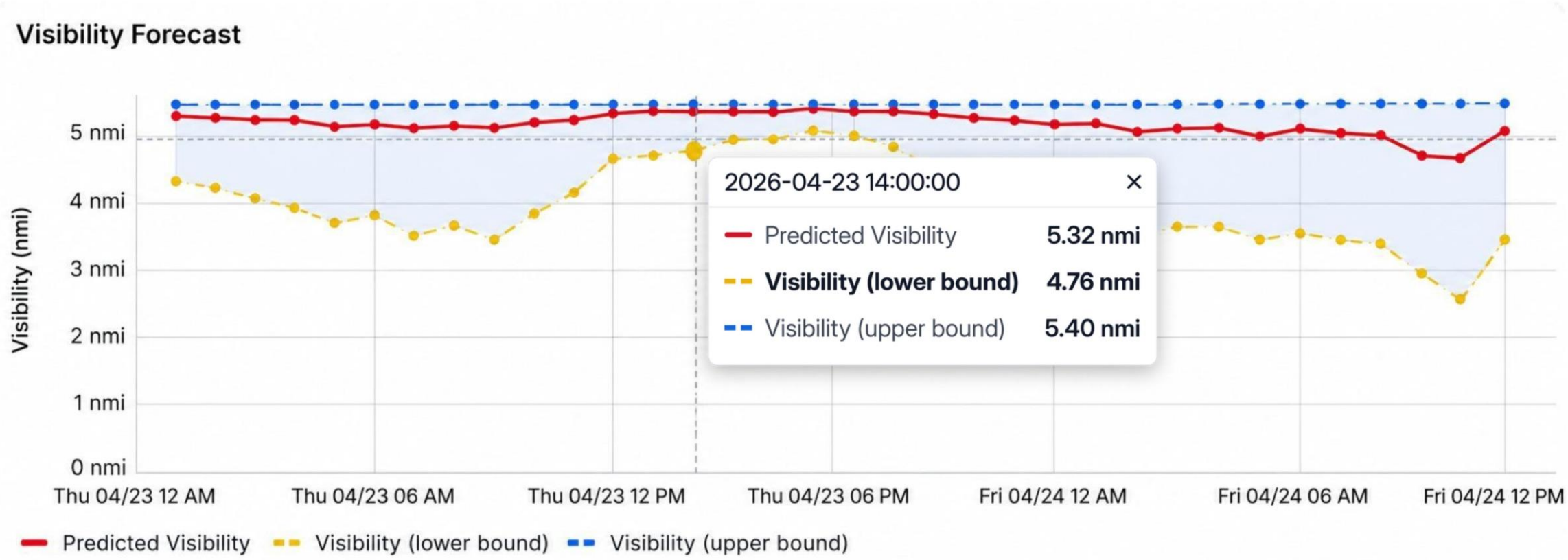
PRODUCT SAMPLE · WINDS · SEA STATE

Maritime Operations



PRODUCT SAMPLE · FOG

Port Navigation



Forecasts the onset, duration, and clearing of fog to help harbor pilots plan vessel transits.

Connect

Bonnie Schneider | CEO & Co-Founder

bonnie@skywindsolutions.com

skywindsolutions.com

Connect on LinkedIn



Building the Future of Maritime Autonomy

Blue Ops | Southeast Florida Blue Tech Conference
September 30, 2026 | Broward Center for the Performing Arts

B-26

A proven, open-architecture unmanned surface vessel built to integrated evolving technologies and adapt to changing mission requirements

Length: 25.6 ft | **Max Speed:** 40 kn | **Payload:** 1,800 lbs | **ISR Endurance:** 450 hrs | **Range:** 2,500 nm (maritime security speed)| **Control:** Autonomous / Remote / Local



CAPABILITY	APPLICATION
Distributed Operations	Extended maritime reach with reduced personnel risk
Modular Open Architecture	Rapid integration of mission-specific payloads and sensors
Autonomous & Remote Operations	Flexible mission planning and vessel control
Resilient Communications	Beyond-line-of-sight connectivity and communications relay
Multi-Domain Integration	Interoperability with UAS and existing command systems
Maritime Security & ISR	Port security, surveillance, and maritime domain awareness

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA | INNOVATION & OPERATIONS

WEST PALM BEACH, FL

Innovation & Engineering

- Vessel engineering and design
- Autonomous systems development
- Payload and systems integration
- Technology showcase & demonstrations



FORT PIERCE, FL

Testing & Operational Development

- Maritime testing and validation
- Operational demonstrations
- Training and technology evaluation
- Academic and industry collaboration



EXTENDING MARITIME SECURITY BEYOND THE SHORELINE

01 | PERSISTENT MARITIME SURVEILLANCE

- Monitor port approaches, waterways, and critical infrastructure
- Extend operational coverage beyond fixed security systems

02 | REMOTE OPERATIONS & RAPID RESPONSE

- Deploy remotely operated or autonomous patrol missions
- Assess potential threats while reducing personnel exposure

03 | INTEGRATED MARITIME SECURITY

- Integrate cameras, sensors, and communications systems
- Deliver actionable information to maritime security teams

04 | OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

- Extend patrol coverage without proportional increases in crew requirements
- Support repeatable monitoring and inspection missions





BLUE OPS x FAU HARBOR BRANCH

Establishing a regional hub for maritime autonomy testing, training, and technology development through collaboration with Florida Atlantic University.



01 | TESTING & VALIDATION

- Real-world evaluation of unmanned maritime systems
- Public-sector support for testing access and infrastructure

02 | TRAINING & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Operator training and technical skill development
- Academic partnerships and regional talent pipelines

03 | RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY

- Collaborative research and autonomous systems development
- Opportunities for joint technology demonstrations

04 | REGIONAL ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

- Expanding Blue Ops' Treasure Coast operations
- 60+ projected employees by mid-2027


BLUE OPS
A RED CAT COMPANY



Q&A

What Blue Tech Companies Do in Southeast Florida

Workforce, Credentials, and Employer Commitments

Moderator:
Robert P. Smith, PhD
Interim Assistant Vice President of Research
Nova Southeastern University



Jim Allen
CEO
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
Executive Vice President & CFO
The College of the Florida Keys



Glenn A. Wilshire
Deputy Director
Port Everglades

SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach

Our emerging ocean economy workforce support system

Our first step:
Identify the top in-demand, high-wage jobs in Florida's Ocean Economy.

What we learned:
54,937 post-secondary credentials were awarded in Florida that could lead to a thriving job/career in our ocean economy.



Florida Office of OCEAN ECONOMY at Florida Atlantic University

Colin Polsky
Professor & Assoc VP
FAU
cpolsky@fau.edu

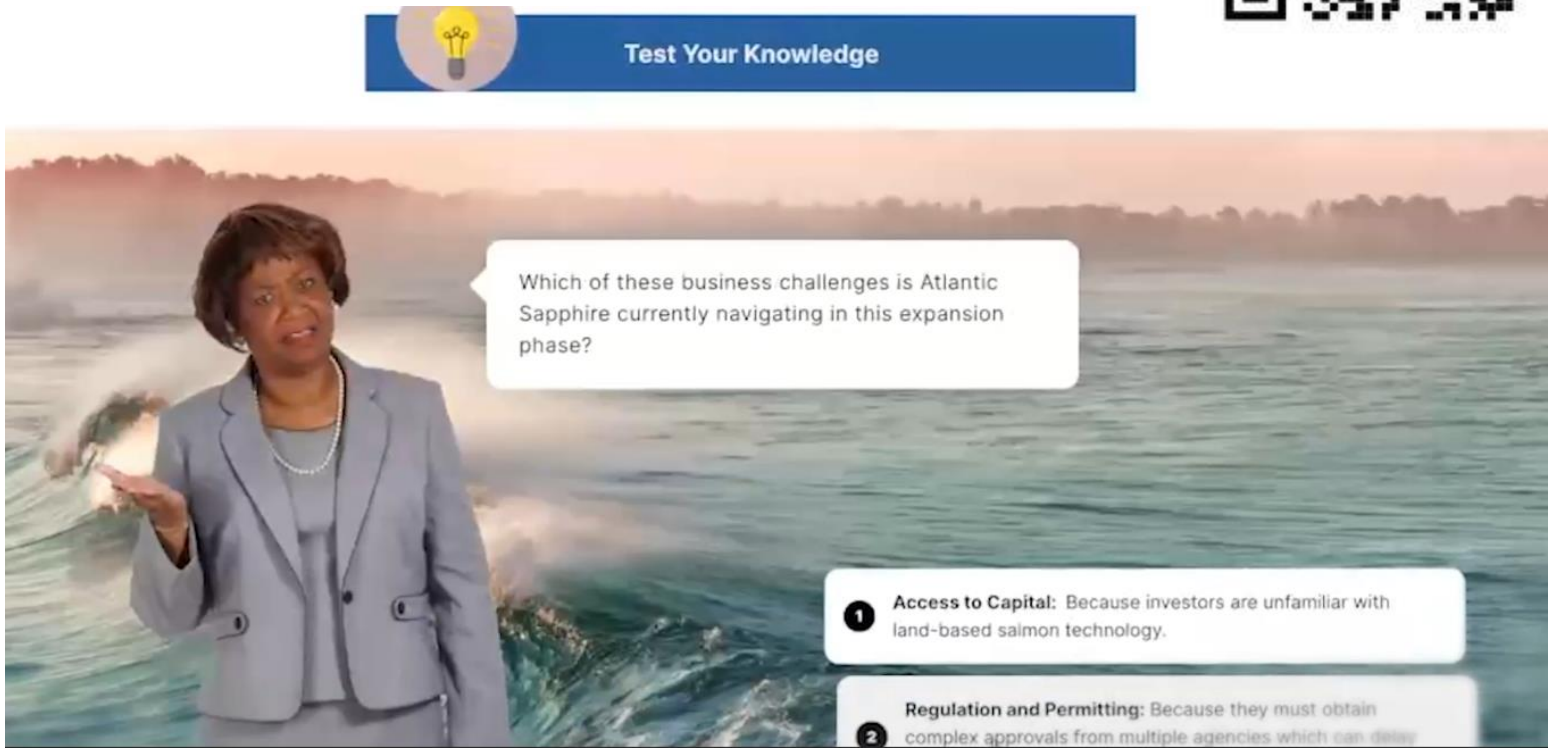
What we need to know:

1. Do these ocean economy-suited college/university students even know about the ocean economy?

Solution:

1. A quick, fun micro-credential





Florida Office of OCEAN ECONOMY at Florida Atlantic University

What we need to know:

2. Are colleges/universities intentionally preparing learners for these ocean economy jobs?

Solution:

2. A new curriculum



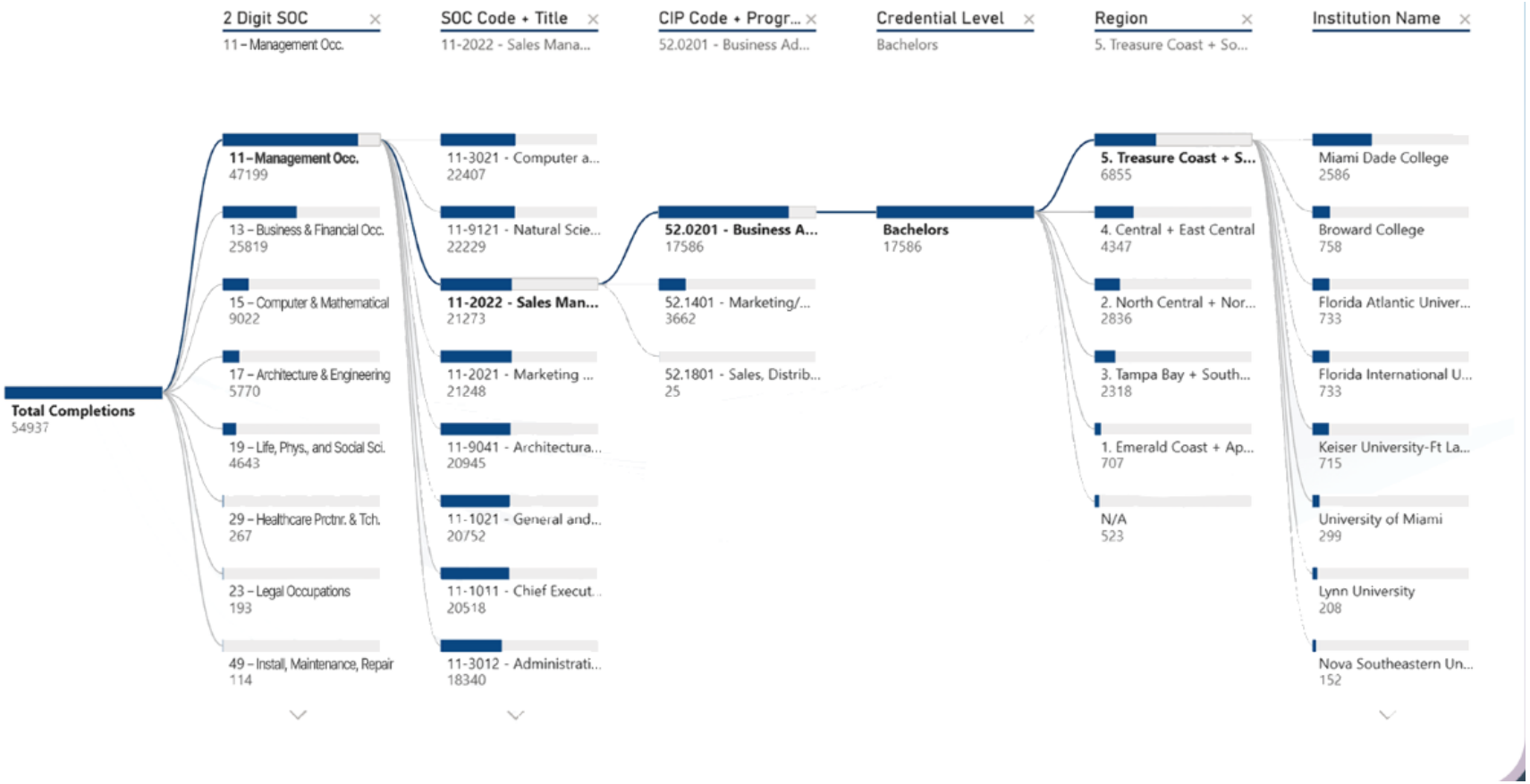
Florida Office of OCEAN ECONOMY at Florida Atlantic University

What we need to know:

3. Are ocean economy employers finding the ocean economy-suited graduates?

Solution:

3. An app for matching ocean economy student interests with credentials – and jobs



Florida Office of OCEAN ECONOMY at Florida Atlantic University

Our emerging workforce support system

What we need to know:

1. Do these ocean economy-suited college/university students even know about the ocean economy?
2. Are colleges/universities intentionally preparing learners for these ocean economy jobs?
3. Are ocean economy employers finding the ocean economy-suited graduates?

Solution:

1. A quick, fun micro-credential
2. A new curriculum
3. An app for matching ocean economy student interests with credentials – and jobs



Florida Office of OCEAN ECONOMY at Florida Atlantic University

Colin Polsky
Professor & Assoc VP
FAU
cpolsky@fau.edu



Q&A

Workforce, Credentials, and Employer Commitments


LUNCH

Keynote Speaker



The Honorable Daniella Levine Cava

Mayor

Miami-Dade County

Special Presentation: “Intersection of the Blue Tech Economy & Defense Priorities in Southeast Florida”



Captain Rick Miller
U.S. Navy (ret.)
Executive Director
South Florida Defense Alliance



Q&A

Intersection of the Blue Tech Economy & Defense Priorities in Southeast Florida

Regulatory Pathways, Permitting, and Local Government Tools

Moderator:
James Kohnstamm, CEcD
Director of Economic Development
Miami-Dade County



The Honorable Chip LaMarca
State Representative
100th District





Philip R. McChesney, MSW
Director & Deputy Chief Innovation Officer
Broward County



Loren Parra, MBA
Director & Chief Resilience Officer
Department of Environmental Resources Management
Miami-Dade County



Chris Roschek, PE
Chief Resiliency Officer
City of Hollywood

SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach



Q&A

Regulatory Pathways, Permitting, and Local Government Tools

Research, Commercialization, and Capital



Moderator:
Katherine O'Fallon
Executive Director
Marine Research Hub



Michael Burtov
Chief Innovation Officer & Executive Director
Alan B. Levan NSU Broward Center of Innovation



Daniel Kleinman
Founder and CEO
Seaworthy Collective



Mark Volchek
Principal & Founding Partner
Las Olas Venture Capital



Steven Vollmer, PhD
Director
School of Environmental, Coastal, and Ocean Sustainability
Florida Atlantic University

SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach



Q&A

Research, Commercialization, and Capital

Implementation Discussion, Next Steps, and Closing Remarks



The Honorable Steve Geller
SFRPC Council Member & Chair,
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
Broward County Commissioner, District 5



The Honorable Maria Marino
Chair, TCRPC
Palm Beach County Commissioner, District 1

SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

tcrpc
treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach

Est. 1974 SFRPC
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties

treasure coast regional planning council
indian river · st lucie · martin · palm beach

THANK YOU!

