

Blue Tech Jobs Overview

From Research to Commercial Deployment

Blue Tech is the segment of the ocean economy sector of the larger economy that is characterized by innovation, research, and commercialization of marine technologies ranging from lab prototypes to in-water demonstration at ocean and inland waterway sites.[1]

In preparation for the SFRPC / TCRPC Blue Tech Jobs Conference, the SFRPC undertook a review of **what local governments can do to support pilot testing and commercialization** of the Blue Tech industry in the South Florida region of Monroe, Miami-Dade, and Broward counties. The SFRPC is the U.S. Department of Commerce designated Economic Development District for South Florida.[1]

The region has specialized research assets, including the UM Rosenstiel School, FAU SeaTech, NSU's Oceanographic Campus, FIU Aquarius, the Navy's South Florida Ocean Measurement Facility, and three public seaports.[1]

NINE BLUE TECH TECHNOLOGY GROUPS

1. Ocean observation and water-quality sensing
2. Autonomous and uncrewed marine systems
3. Marine renewable energy
4. Aquaculture and seafood technology
5. Marine pharmaceuticals and biotechnology
6. Coral and ecosystem restoration
7. Resilient coastal infrastructure and materials
8. Marine manufacturing and clean vessels
9. Marine data and software

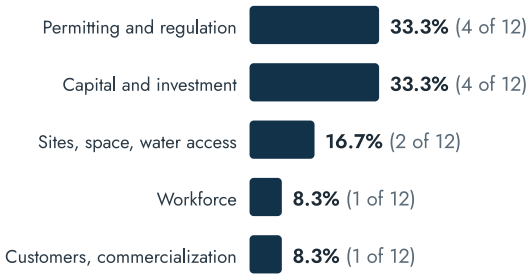
Blue Tech has no industry classification code of its own. No public source separately reports its employment or wages, so no job estimate is given here.[1]

Blue Tech Jobs Conference
October 30, 2026
Hosted by SFRPC and TCRPC

Photo: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Charles E. White

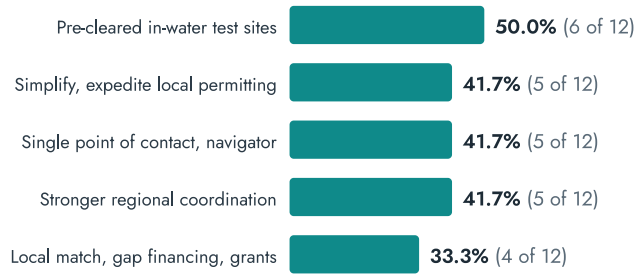
Single Largest Barrier

Share of firms, one choice, n = 12



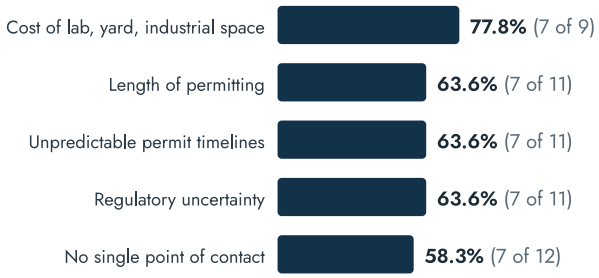
Most Useful Local or Regional Actions

Share of firms, up to three choices, n = 12



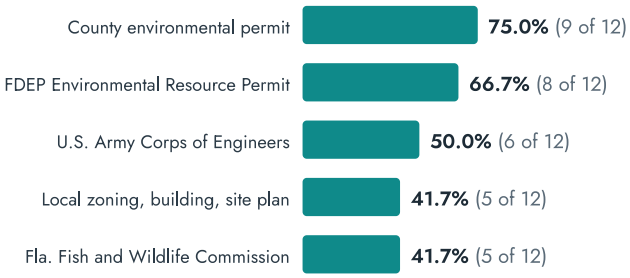
Rated a Significant or Critical Barrier

Share of firms rating each item; "N/A" answers excluded, so n varies



Approvals Sought or Expected

Share of firms, select all that apply, n = 12



SFRPC survey distributed by the Marine Research Hub to 40 Blue Tech firms; 12 responded between July 29 and Oct. 1, 2026 (30%). Nine of the 12 work mainly in coastal resilience or shoreline infrastructure. Each n counts firms that gave a substantive answer; on rating items, firms could answer "N/A." One of the 12 expects to seek no approvals. Results are directional, not a representative sample of regional firms.[3]

The City of St. Petersburg Model

2016
Innovation District partnership forms

2019
City creates EC-2 research zoning (base FAR 3.0, max. 5.0)

2021
City licenses its waterfront Hub building to the nonprofit

2026
District Master Plan proposes waterfront changes

The City owns the 32,386 sq. ft. Maritime and Defense Technology Hub. The nonprofit District manages it and subleases space to more than 20 organizations, whose lease terms include local hiring, internships, mentoring, and technical exchange.[1,2]

Where Can Blue Tech Grow?

66 candidate parcels in 7 counties

306.7 total acres

132.1 waterfront acres (32 parcels)

174.6 non-waterfront acres (34 parcels)

The BlueTech Site Finder maps potential locations for shared facilities and pilots, classed by use: vessel testing, aquaculture R&D, demonstration areas, sensors, fabrication, and laboratories. Candidate sites require further review.[1]

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

1. A defined demonstration permit
Publish eligible activities, conditions, and review steps for pilot-scale demonstrations.[1]

2. Public test sites and a designated contact
Host repeat demonstrations and procure pilot services. Required state and federal authorizations still apply.[1]

3. Clear use categories and waterfront protections
Match water access to research, testing, and marine production.[1]

4. Shared facilities with an accountable operator
Define access, costs, maintenance, and community commitments.[1]

Next steps after the conference. **Site verification:** verify Site Finder candidates, access terms, and owner interest. **Demonstration:** a host site, coordinating contact, and approval path. **CEDS action:** operating costs, funding needs, and workforce commitments for the 2027–2032 CEDS update; inclusion does not establish grant eligibility or assure an award.[1]

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Sources. **1** SFRPC staff research and Blue Tech Jobs conference slides, Oct. 30, 2026: review of regional facilities, selected local programs and zoning codes, and peer regions; Blue Tech definition and technology groups; local actions and next steps; BlueTech Site Finder (slide 11, version supplied Oct. 28, 2026). **2** St. Petersburg Innovation District, "Maritime and Defense Technology Hub," stpeteinnovationdistrict.com; City of St. Petersburg Code sec. 16.10.010.3. **3** SFRPC, Southeast Florida Blue Tech Regulatory and Business Conditions Survey, response workbook, responses 1–12; shares are the stated counts divided by n.