

## **Florida Hit By Worst 'Red Tide' Bloom in Over a Decade**

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The toxic algae boom along Florida's southwestern coast is killing marine life—and decimating tourism.

Red tide, the build-up of a toxic algae in oceans that's harmful to humans and marine animals, isn't unusual in Florida—in fact, it happens every year. But this time it's different: Now stretching into its tenth month is the biggest and longest red tide since 2006, the Miami Herald reports, and it is leaving beaches littered with dead fish and devoid of tourists.

Affecting a popular stretch of beaches from Naples to Tampa, on the peninsula's Gulf of Mexico Coast, the red tide has killed hundreds of sea turtles, along with seabirds, fish, dolphins, and even a whale shark. The red tide is made up of a huge concentration of a type of algae, *Karenia brevis*, that turns the water a reddish-brown or green color and creates chemicals that attack the nervous system of marine life.

For humans, red tide can cause respiratory irritation to those on shore, itchy skin or a burning sensation in the eyes of swimmers. Tourism on Florida's southwestern coast has slowed to a standstill, says the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, with the smell of dead fish lining beaches only adding to the problems. A report from Visit Sarasota showed that some 75 percent of hotels in the county have seen cancelations due to red tide, local news channel ABC 7 reports. Seaside restaurants in Fort Myers have been closing early with employees complaining of respiratory irritation and beachfront tables sitting empty, Southwest Florida news site Wink reports.