

Benthos of the Alafia River estuary (Tampa Bay, Florida, USA) during and after a
prolonged period of low freshwater inflow

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Abstract

The Tampa Bay area experienced a period of at least 19 months of extremely low freshwater inflows that end in July 2001. The Alafia River estuary, one of the tidal rivers discharging to the Bay, experienced monthly flows ranging from 8% to 39% of the long-term monthly averages. Benthic data have been collected on a monthly basis since June 2000 using a probabilistic design. This was one element of a monitoring program designed to assess possible ecological effects from a series of projects to provide potable water for the region. These data were used to characterize the benthos during the drought and then compare them to the immediate post-drought period. Drought vs. post-drought community structure were analyzed for spatial and seasonal (high flow vs. low flow) differences.

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