



Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project

Month 9 Maintenance Report

FDEP PERMIT NUMBER: 27-0192455-004-EI

USACE PERMIT NUMBER: SAJ-2019-01203

Prepared On:
February 10th, 2026

Prepared For:
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Date of Work Accomplished

The ninth monthly maintenance event for the Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project was performed on February 10th, 2026.

Tasks Accomplished

1. Monitored Plant Growth and Survival
2. Removed biofouling from the GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Devices

Task Description

1. **Monitored Plant Growth and Survival** – A team of Sea & Shoreline biologists monitored planting units. Plant growth and survival were noted, and any displaced planting units were carefully replanted by hand. Monitoring was performed in water using a mask and snorkel.
2. **Removed biofouling from the GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Devices** – Biofouling that had accumulated on the top and side mesh of the GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Devices was removed by a team of Sea & Shoreline biologists using stiff-bristled scrub brushes. All biofouling removal was performed in water using a mask and snorkel.

Notes and Event Summary

Month 9 Maintenance and Monitoring Event

The ninth monthly maintenance event for the Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project occurred on February 10th, 2026. The GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Devices exhibited light levels of biofouling, consisting mainly of settled sediments, filamentous algae and entrapped leaf litter. Sea & Shoreline biologists removed biofouling from the top and side mesh of the devices using stiff-bristled brushes (**Figures 1 & 2**).

The estimated success rate of *V. neotropicalis* within GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Devices remained similar to that of past maintenance events, with roughly 80% of the devices exhibiting successful growth. *V. neotropicalis* coverages ranged from 0.5 to 4 on the Braun-Blanquet coverage scale (<5% - 75%). The blade height of protected units varied from 10 cm to upwards of 55 cm. Canopy heights were noted to be slightly lower than previous months, likely due to increased grazing pressure (**Figure 3**). As manatees and turtles migrate out of the river during the coming warmer months, grazing pressure should decrease, promoting greater vertical growth of *V. neotropicalis*.

Supplemental planting units installed at site 5 were observed in approximately 30% of the GrowSAV™ Devices. Protected units were covered by approximately 5-7 cm of settled sediment and were only revealed once this sediment was gently brushed away. The observed slower growth rate can be attributed to colder weather and shorter days, as it is currently outside of the growing season. An overall increase in the biomass of submerged aquatic vegetation is anticipated in coming months as we move into the growing season of late March and early April.


Unprotected planting units remain short but are continuing to laterally expand throughout the deeper portions of the river (**Figures 4 & 5**). The canopy height of unprotected units remains relatively unchanged, ranging from 2-15 cm. Unprotected units were observed at coverages of 0.5 to 3 on the Braun-Blanquet coverage scale (<5% - 50%).

Recommendations and Rectifications

There remains evidence of steady erosion around parts of the planting area, with more rapid erosion noticed on the outside bends of the river (**Figure 6**). If erosion continues to worsen, supplemental planting in areas that experience less water flow may be recommended. The supplemental planting units at site 5 will continue to be monitored and sediment inside devices will continue to be removed as necessary. Salinity data will be recorded at site 5 during the next maintenance event to determine if it is still a rate limiting factor to plant growth. Maintenance will continue for the next three months, with the next event taking place in March of 2026.

Maps.



	<p>Location: Hernando County, FL</p>	<p>PROJECT: Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project EXHIBIT: Restoration Overview DRWN FOR: Reporting</p>	<p>Drawn By: BK Checked By: RB Date: 06/04/2025 Sheet 01</p>
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Map 1 – Overview of Restoration Area.



Map 2 – Overview of GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Device Installation Locations.

Figures.



Figure 1. Example of biofouling on GrowSAV™ device

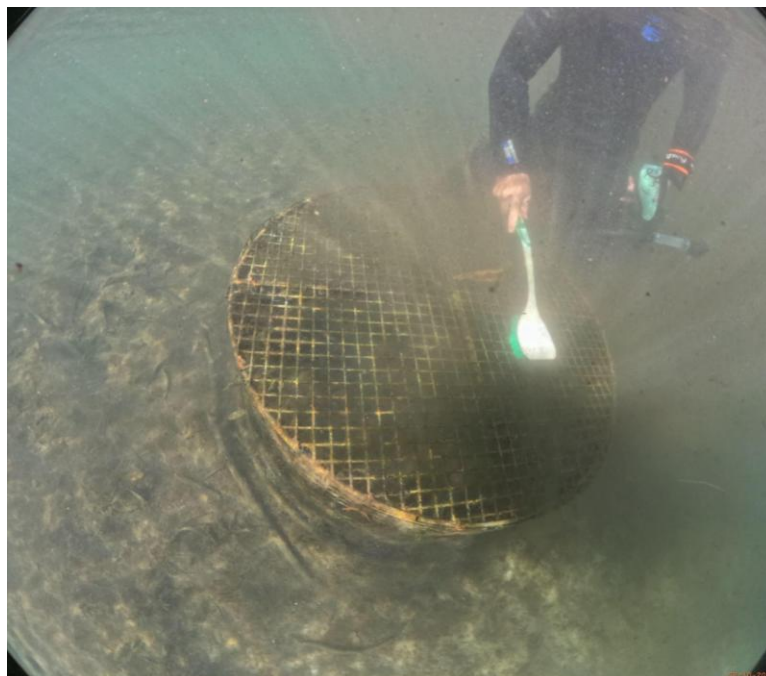


Figure 2. Example of biofouling removal of GrowSAV™ Device by Sea & Shoreline biologist



Figure 3. Example of protected units.



Figure 4. Example of unprotected units showing signs of lateral expansion.



Figure 5. Example of unprotected planting units.



Figure 6. Example of an area experiencing increased sediment relocation due to current.