



Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project

Month 10 Maintenance Report

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Prepared For:

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Date of Work Accomplished

The tenth monthly maintenance event for the Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project was performed on March 23rd, 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 10 Maintenance and Monitoring Event

The tenth monthly maintenance event for the Weeki Wachee River SAV Restoration Project occurred on March 23rd, 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**).

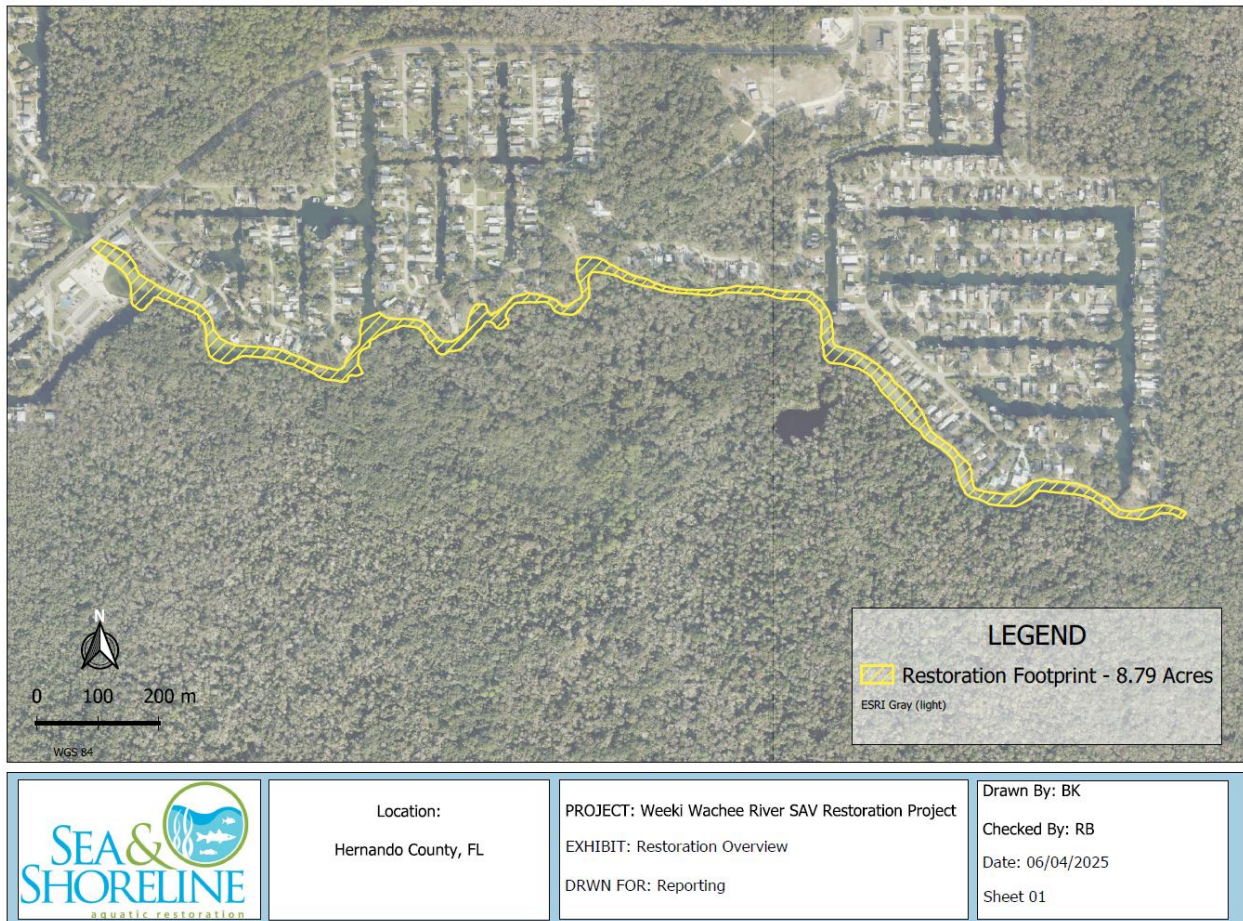
The estimated success rate of *V. neotropicalis* within GrowSAV™ Herbivory Exclusion Devices has decreased slightly since month 9, with approximately 65% of the devices exhibiting successful growth. *V. neotropicalis* coverage ranged from 0.5 to 4 on the Braun-Blanquet coverage scale (<5% - 75%). The blade height of protected units varied from 10 cm to upwards of 60 cm. Canopy heights of unprotected units were noted to be slightly lower than previous months, likely due to increased grazing pressure during the winter months (**Figure 3**). Unprotected units remain short but continue to display signs of lateral expansion throughout the river. Unprotected units were observed at coverages of 0.5 to 3 on the Braun-Blanquet coverage scale (<5% - 50%).

Supplemental planting units installed at site 5 were observed in approximately 20% of the GrowSAV™ Devices. A dense *Chaetomorpha* bloom was observed at site 5 during this event, covering almost 90% of the total area where GrowSAV Devices are installed (**Figure 6**). *Chaetomorpha* usually blooms when there are excess nutrients in the system and prefers higher salinity levels. The bloom that appeared shortly after supplemental units were installed could be smothering the new units and blocking light availability.

Recommendations and Rectifications

The *Chaetomorpha* bloom at site 5 will continue to be monitored, any algae that builds up within the devices will be gently swept out. An overall increase in the biomass of submerged aquatic vegetation is anticipated in coming months as we move into the growing season. Maintenance will continue for the next two months, with the next event taking place in April of 2026.

Maps.



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.



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 *Chaetomorpha* at the most downstream site.