

Red tide dissipates off Tampa Bay

December 5 2005

A massive red tide that has spewed toxins into the Gulf of Mexico for nearly a year reportedly is starting to disappear.

Oceanographers have been monitoring the algae since the bloom was reported in January and then spread into Tampa Bay -- the first time in 30 years red tide has occurred in the bay, the Tampa (Fla.) Tribune reported Monday.

The algae still concentrated offshore is about a 10th of its peak size, when it covered an area of water the size of Connecticut.

Satellite pictures late last week showed the approximately 10-mile-wide bloom stretched from Sarasota, Fla., southward for about 60 miles, remaining about 30 miles off the coast.

Recent water samples showed about 1,500 cells of algae per liter of water, down from the 3.5 million per liter count reported two months ago by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

Red tides in the Gulf of Mexico usually bloom during the late summer or early fall and disappear by winter, the Tribune said. This bloom developed in January, and scientists don't know why.

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