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18 U.S. cruise passengers quarantined

NEWS, 5A

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

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SEAGRASS GROWTH LAUDED

Some lagoon scientists believe rebound will be lasting

Jim Waymer
 Florida Today | USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Seagrass, the foundation of the Indian River Lagoon food web, has more than doubled in acreage in just four years. That inspired congratulatory gestures Tuesday, May 12, from regional water managers.

Algae blooms have all but wiped out the lagoon's seagrass over the past 20 years.

During that time, there have been periods when the seagrass seemed to be rebounding, only to die off again.

This time will be different, some lagoon scientists assert, because of the efforts made to cleanse the lagoon of the things that trigger algae growth.

Only time will tell if they are right.

Truth is told on the water

Alex Gorichky, who witnesses the realities on the lagoon almost daily via his Local Lines Charter Lines Guide Service fishing trips, is witnessing the recovery. "It was barren sand," Gorichky said of the lagoon bottom. "It takes years."

Now, in the wake of worst drought in 25 years and another record hard freeze, SJRWMD again is touting seagrass recovery:

See SEAGRASS, Page 4A



Lorae Simpson and Lauren Hall measure sea grass growth while taking water and core samples in the lagoon. A group of environmental scientists with the St. Johns River Water Management District was recently out in the Indian River Lagoon in north Titusville checking the area for signs of seagrass recovery.

TOP: Lauren Hall records her findings on the seagrass recovery in the area as part of the group's research.

PHOTOS BY MALCOLM DENEMARK/FLORIDA TODAY

FL officials get back to work on budget

4 days of negotiations expected in OT session

John Kennedy and Stephany Matat
 Capital Bureau
 USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Florida lawmakers began another attempt to settle on a state budget - a task forcing them for the second straight year to go into a taxpayer-costly overtime session.

The Legislature convened May 12 for what is expected to be four days of negotiations between budget conferees from the House and Senate. The goal is to finalize and vote on a close-to-\$116 billion budget by May 29, the final day of the scheduled special session.

The new state budget year begins July 1, so a deadline looms for lawmakers.

House Speaker Daniel Perez, R-Miami, and Senate President Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, said nothing about earlier spending clashes when gaveling lawmakers into what amounted to only a one-hour floor session before conference committees were expected to begin later in the day.

See BUDGET SESSION, Page 6A

Brightline faces financial woes, derailed future

John Pacenti
 USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Kelle Capewell, getting off the Brightline train in Boca Raton during an early May evening, said she and her husband chose to settle in the city partly because of the rail line. They planned to use it to commute to work in Aventura and Miami.

"You've got the pass where you could use Uber and everything," she said. "It seemed too good to be true."

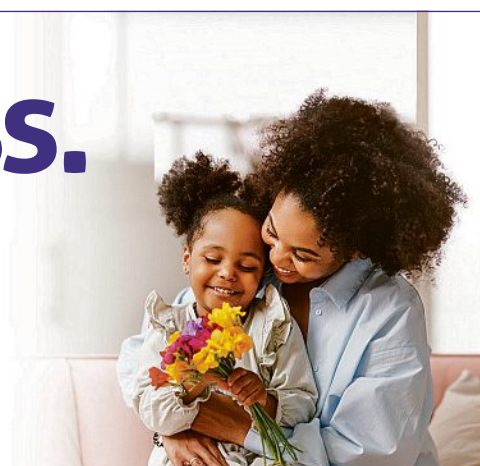
Then the prices started to increase, the commuter pass disappeared for a

See BRIGHTLINE, Page 8A



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