

# Queensland *news* Seagrass-Watch

ISSUE 2,  
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## **775 sites covered in Hervey Bay Survey !**

From December 6-14, DPI Seagrass Ecology team (Rob, Len, Anthony, Paul & Karen) joined with DEPA\* staff (Kai, Michael, Steve & the 'Yarrallee' crew) and local HBDSMP volunteers to undertake a comprehensive seagrass mapping survey of Hervey Bay and the Great Sandy Straits. The survey covered 58 deepwater sites and 717 coastal dives. A sled with mounted video equipment was towed behind the 'Volante II' for the deepwater survey. Seagrass was found as deep as 27 metres in the northern section of Hervey Bay. The coastal survey was all free dives using snorkel gear.

After the survey, Dr Rob Coles reported "that based on preliminary analysis of the data, there appears to have been a complete recovery from the seagrass losses observed in 1993". Since then there has been more severe flooding, and DEPA has requested for further post-flood monitoring to see if the seagrass again declines. The post-flood monitoring project will utilise some of the deepwater and coastal sites surveyed during December. The surveys will be conducted in April, July, and December.

In conjunction with the April monitoring trip, a helicopter survey is to be conducted to assist in preparing the GIS maps of the Great Sandy Straits. Seagrass Watch volunteers will also be working during the low tides to assist us in filling some of the data gaps (*Please contact Jerry for details*). A Public Forum is planned for July/ August to present the results of our work so far in Hervey Bay.

\* DEPA is the Department of Environmental Protection Agency (previously it was the Department of Environment and Heritage).



**Turtle struck down in its prime.....**An autopsy was conducted by Hamish Malcolm (DEPA) at Hook Island during the Whitsunday Seagrass Survey. The healthy, male turtle had washed ashore and died from massive injuries due to propeller strikes from what was probably a large vessel. Thanks to the staff from Hook Island for reporting the find so quickly.

## **1134 dives for Whitsundays Seagrass Survey**

The Whitsunday Baseline Seagrass Survey was conducted from the January 8 - 15. Eight days at 141 free dives a day - not bad going! To complete the survey the DPI team (Anthony, Chantal, Warren, Karen)) worked with DEPA staff (Hamish & the 'Wirrana' crew). Local OUCH and Whitsunday volunteers also gave assistance whilst continuing to build their seagrass knowledge. Several dugong and turtle were sighted during the survey.

Over the next low tides, volunteers will be



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# Queensland Seagrass-Watch *news* continued ..

## **Continued....**

assisting the DPI team in filling the data gaps for the January survey. Before Easter Karen, Chantal and some volunteers surveyed the inner areas of Muddy Bay, Shute Harbour, and Pidgeon Island. Seagrass was found at all areas, and Pidgeon Island had heaps of dugong trails. We also discovered just how muddy, Muddy Bay is - funny that!

## **Good Tides for Seagrass Watch**

### **WHITSUNDAYS**

**April 13-17** Lowest tide down to 0.23 m, on Friday 16th at 4.50pm..

**May 12-16** Lowest tide down to 0.08m on Saturday 16th at 4.20 pm.

**June 10-15** Lowest tide down to 0.02m on Sunday 13th at 4.05 pm.

### **HERVEY BAY**

**April 15-18** Lowest tide 0.28m, on Saturday 17th at 3.30 pm.

**May 13-17** Lowest tide 0.22m, on Sat 15th at 2.20 pm.

**June 11-15** Lowest tide 0.22m, on Sunday 13th at 2 pm.

**Seagrass-Watch** aims to increase awareness and involve the community in collecting information on changes in seagrass meadow characteristics. The Seagrass-Watch program will contribute significantly to management of local coastal areas.

Seagrass-Watch programs are funded by the Natural Heritage Trust-Coast and Clean Seas Program and CRC Reef Research, currently underway in the Hervey Bay and Whitsunday regions.



**Any comments or suggestions about the Seagrass-Watch program would be greatly appreciated.**

**NEXT ISSUE OUT JULY 1999**



**Hervey Bay students spent time with Jerry Comans to learn about Seagrass-Watch.**

## **Karen signs off...**

*I am resigning from my role as Seagrass Watch Coordinator on April 23. It was a big decision but I am leaving to take a contract as the Community Development Advisor for an AUSAID funded Program in Mindanao, Philippines. The Seagrass-Watch Coordinator position will be advertised shortly. Thanks for all your support during my time in the job, may the mud never get too deep!*

*Cheers Karen Vidler*

## **Do you want to get involved ?**

*Beach bums, naturalists, teachers, diving-addicts, students, etc... All volunteers are welcome so if you want to get involved for 1 hour, 1 day or for life then contact your local Seagrass Watch representatives:*

### **Hervey Bay:**

Jerry Comans (**Hervey Bay Dugong and Seagrass Monitoring Program**) Tel. 07 41242393

### **Whitsundays:**

Robin Salmon (Whitsunday Volunteers)

Airlie Beach Tel. 07 4948 0219

Tony Fontes (**Order Underwater Coral Heroes**)

Airlie Beach Tel. 07 4946 7435



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