

Queensland *news* Seagrass-Watch

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New faces in the Seagrass-Watch Program

The Seagrass Ecology Group has recently employed a temporary Coordinator until September 1999 to take over Karen Vidler's position while recruitment and selection of the Seagrass-Watch Coordinator occurs. Michael Baer has come on board to fill that position. Michael recently worked in Townsville as Coordinator for the indigenous Communities of Palm Island and the Townsville and Magnetic Island region. Michael has a background in marine science and protected area management.

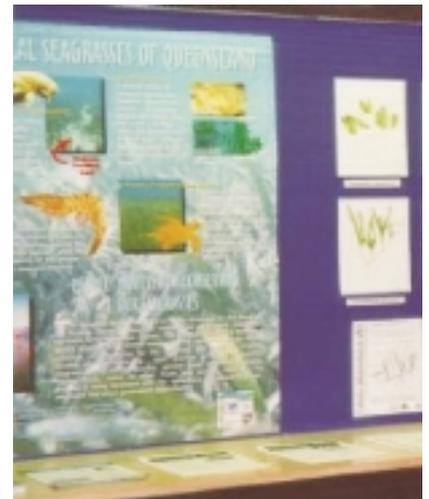
Another new face who will be the on-ground support from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is Angus Thompson. Angus replaces Hamish Malcolm who has taken up a position in Hobart with CSIRO working on a project on Great White sharks. Angus has been temporarily recruited by QPWS from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) until November 1999. Angus was previously a research scientist at AIMS in their reef-monitoring program.

Seagrass-Watch Logo Design

Now that the Seagrass-Watch Program has become established, we feel that its time to have our own identity. So, we are holding a competition for a new logo design. Come one and all creative talent and put your thinking caps on for a logo that best represents community groups doing seagrass monitoring. Apart from going down in history as the person behind the logo on the shirt on the volunteer, you will also win a "small" prize. Send entries to Michael Baer at Northern Fisheries Centre. Good luck!

What's Been Happening At N7C For Seagrass-Watch?

The Seagrass Ecology Group has produced a presentation at the Australian Museum in Sydney over the coming months as part of the Community section of a Biodiversity display. The display includes posters about the Seagrass-Watch Program (focussing on participant Community groups of course!); each region's program; tropical seagrass species; and a 3-minute continuous play video conveying the message on the importance of seagrasses and showing how its all done in the field (*Chantal and Warren are the stars!*).



Third Region Hoped For Seagrass-Watch Monitoring

Following interest expressed last year, the QPWS and Seagrass Ecology Group recently submitted an application to the Federal government program Coasts and Clean Seas, for funding to establish a Seagrass-Watch Program in the Port Douglas/Mossman region. The application has been before the Technical Assessment panel and is presently before the State Assessment Panel. We expect to hear how things have gone with the application by November this year. *Cross your fingers for us!*



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Hervey Bay Happenings!

Post-Flood monitoring

A field survey to monitor impacts on seagrasses within Hervey Bay following major flooding of the Mary River catchment in February was undertaken by the QDPI Seagrass Ecology Group, in collaboration with Maryborough Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) on 14 & 15 April 1999. Seagrass was found in lower abundance but with a similar distribution to the previous survey in December 1998. Much of the coastal and deepwater seagrasses had lost leaves, or still had leaves attached that were in a deteriorated condition. New seagrass shoots were found in most areas of the survey.

The decline in abundance of seagrass and deterioration of seagrass leaves are most likely due to natural seasonal variation, but the decline may have been exacerbated by the Mary River flood. The decline of seagrass abundance in the Bay may limit dugong food resources, but the presence of new shoots indicates the seagrasses are recovering. The findings of the next monitoring survey in August 1999 will determine the level of seagrass recovery and whether there would be any concern for the dugong populations of the Bay.



Volunteers hard at work in Hervey Bay

Data collection has continued to take place in the Hervey Bay region and has produced some interesting results. Surveys were conducted on 15 and 16 May 1999. John Roberts & Steve Winderlich surveyed 14 sites at Boonooroo/Tuan, Vanessa Jamieson & Karla surveyed 23 sites at Poona and Greg Lynch & Gary Nielsen surveyed 40 sites also at Poona. Volunteers found extensive areas of seagrass previously unmapped. These meadows were also heavily used by dugong in the region, evident from the high concentration of dugong feeding trails. John Lindberg surveyed 17 sites at Marsh Creek and found sparse cover of seagrass (mainly



Hervey Bay students learn about seagrasses.

Zostera capricorni & *Halodule uninervis*) with lots of exposed rhizomes. John however found no evidence of dugong feeding, although dugongs were recently observed in the area.

Seagrass Ecology Group trip to Hervey Bay

The next trip to Hervey Bay is planned for 9-18 August 1999. We plan to assist in establishing the intertidal monitoring sites between 9-12 August. Volunteers are welcome to attend during the afternoon of these days. Contact Jerry Comans on Ph. (07) 4124 2393 or Steve Winderlich on Ph. (07) 4121 1933 if you are interested. The Group will attend the meeting of the Hervey Bay Dugong and Seagrass Monitoring Program on Thursday night 12 August and looks forward to seeing everyone there.

Good tides for Seagrass-Watch

HERVEY BAY (BURNETT HEADS)

July 9-16 & 28-31 Lowest tides 0.23m on Tuesday 13th at 2.35 pm and 0.46m on Thursday 29th at 2.50 pm.

August 8-14 & 26-30 Lowest tides 0.24m on Wednesday 11th at 2.25 pm and 0.35m on Saturday 28th at 3.15pm.

September 7-11 & 24-28 Lowest tides 0.30m on Thursday 9th at 2.15 pm and 0.30m on Sunday 26th at 3pm.



Whitsunday Wanderings!

Seagrass Ecology Group trip to Whitsundays

A trip to the Whitsundays is planned for late July 1999. The trip will focus on seagrass monitoring training for the Order of Underwater Coral Heroes (OUCH) group volunteers, will discuss relevant issues to the group and identify locations important to the group for establishing monitoring sites. Areas of interest so far include monitoring anchor damage on seagrass meadows of Whitehaven Beach and Cid Harbour. Specific dates and activities are yet to be finalised so keep in contact with OUCH Coordinator Tony Fontes on (07) 4946 7435.

We will also catch up with the above-water Whitsunday volunteers to discuss any issues at hand and the proposed sites for establishing intertidal seagrass monitoring in the region. Areas mentioned so far include Pioneer Bay, Shute Harbour, Trammel Bay, Hydeaway Bay and Dingo Beach. It seems Muddy Bay is just a bit too muddy to work in! A trip to the Whitsundays to establish the sites for intertidal monitoring is planned to take place in September. Keep posted for further updates.

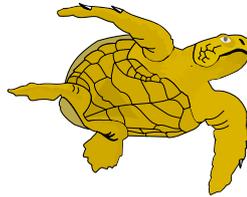


Whitsunday volunteers engrossed in training.

More moving and shaking

We would like to send out a call to any interested person to take on the role as local contact/facilitator of the Whitsunday Volunteers Seagrass-Watch Program. Robin Salmon is unable to continue in the

position any longer due to personal commitments over the next year. Rather than putting in less than the effort Robin would be happy with, he would like for someone else to take over. A technical background is not necessary as training is provided by Seagrass Ecology Group staff. If anyone is able to act as contact person for the Seagrass-Watch Program, can facilitate meetings of the group, organise monitoring events and liaise with the Seagrass-Watch Coordinator, please contact Robin Salmon directly on 4948 0219, or Michael Baer at the Northern Fisheries Centre on (07) 4035 0113.



New Monitoring 'Node' in Llewellyn Bay Area

A Seagrass-Watch monitoring 'node' is to be established in the Llewellyn Bay area. A small amount of funding has been provided as part of mitigation to offset the loss of fisheries habitat associated with a development in the area, near Sarina.

A meeting is planned to take place at Armstrongs Beach in late-July to discuss the establishment of the monitoring 'node' with the community. It is hoped that members of the local Progress Association, Aboriginal traditional owners and interested members of the community will become involved. Keep posted for further details.

Good tides for Seagrass-Watch

WHITSUNDAYS (SHUTE HARBOUR)

July 8-13 & 26-30 Lowest tides down to 0.03 m on Monday 12th at 3.50pm and 0.45m on Wednesday 28th at 4.15pm.

August 6-13 & 24-28 Lowest tides down to 0.09m on Tuesday 10th at 3.45 pm and 0.36m on Friday 27th at 4.30pm.

September 5-10 & 23-26 Lowest tides down to 0.22m on Tuesday 7th at 2.50 pm and 0.35m on Saturday 25th at 4.15pm.



Queensland Seagrass-Watch *news* continued ..

Reminder!

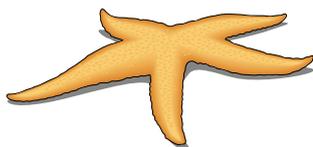
Just a general reminder to all volunteers that data sheets are needed as soon as possible after completing your monitoring. It is easier to enter and analyse data as it becomes available, rather than getting big batches in at one time. Remember, the program serves as an early warning system should anything unusual be happening to seagrass in your area. Also remember that information on the absence of seagrass from an area is just as important as data you collect on the presence of seagrass.

When collecting seagrass specimens and taking photos of your monitoring site, please remember to label your specimens and photos clearly and correctly. Labels are the important link between one source of information (namely the quadrat site or the soon-to-be pressed seagrass specimen) and another (namely the data sheet with the all-important information). Good labeling is the strong link in the chain of important monitoring information.

About Seagrass-Watch

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-Coasts and Clean Seas Program and CRC Reef Research.



Keeping an eye out

As flowering of a number of species of *Halophila* and *Zostera* species of seagrasses has occurred during April and May, keep an eye out for fruits on seagrasses during July and August. *Halophila* species fruit look like miniature apples in shape and are found at the base of the leaf stem. *Zostera* species fruit look like miniature wheat and are found within pockets of thickened tissue of a modified leaf, called a 'spathe'.



Zostera capricorni spathe (scalebar = 1cm)

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)

Ph. (07) 4124 2393

Whitsundays:

Robin Salmon (Whitsunday Volunteers)

Airlie Beach Ph. (07) 4948 0219

Tony Fontes (Order of Underwater Coral Heroes Volunteers) Airlie Beach Ph.

(07) 4946 7435

Contact: Michael Baer or Chantal Roder

**Northern Fisheries Centre
38-40 Tingira Street**

**PO Box 5396,
Cairns. Qld. 4870**

**Email: baerm@dpi.qld.gov.au
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**Any comments or suggestions
about the Seagrass-Watch program
would be greatly appreciated.**

NEXT ISSUE OUT OCTOBER 1999

