

## Seagrass-Watch HQ

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**From:** Seagrass-Watch HQ [hq@seagrasswatch.org]  
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**To:** Seagrass-Watch HQ  
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## SEAGRASS-WATCH E- BULLETIN

*07 May 2007*

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.  
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## NEWS

### ***Seagrass Persistent in Zoned areas (Queensland, Australia)***

April 21, 2007, Townsville Bulletin

Dugongs were the big winners at a reef and rainforest conference, with news that their favourite food, seagrass, has been virtually unaffected by the introduction of the Great Barrier Reef marine park zones. A comprehensive study of seagrasses was presented at the inaugural Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) Synthesis Conference in Townsville this week.

The study, which looked at the distribution of seagrass before and after the introduction of zoning, showed the marine plant was a robust survivor of human activities and natural pressures on the reef. MTSRF managing director Russell Reichelt said the revelation about seagrass was good news for authorities, who would be able to better manage the main food source for dugongs. "Seagrasses are the primary source of production...it is good news for long-term productivity of the reef in terms of fisheries. We now know seagrass is stable over long period, and robust to the natural variations we've seen in the last 10 years."

Another unique method of monitoring the health of the reef was discussed yesterday, using tiny marine creatures called Forams, as indicators of water quality. Forams are small white buttons with natural holes in the middle which wash up on coral beaches. "They vary with different types of water quality, so people are looking at them as new biological indicators of the health of the water," Mr Reichelt said. ...more <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

### **'Act now' to save turtles (Manama,Bahrain)**

May 5th 2007, By Rebecca Torr, Gulf Daily News

BAHRAIN must take action now to save its marine turtles before it is too late, says a leading environmentalist. Marine turtles are losing their habitats because of dredging and reclamation work on Bahrain's shores and consequently their numbers are declining, Environment Friends Society (EFS) president Khawla Al Muhannadi told the GDN.

"Fasht Al Adhm is a very important habitat for turtles, but it is at risk," she said. "The island has sandy beaches where turtles lay their eggs, sea grass which serves as their feeding ground and a coral reef that acts as an important mating ground. "I was contacted by an environmentalist in Oman who is tracking turtles by satellite and he said many of them were now in Bahrain's waters. "But they are at risk in Bahrain because the seagrass they feed on and the coral reef are both threatened.

The alliance is composed of EFS, National Society for Marine Hobbies and the Fisherman Union and supported by the Coastguard and Public Commission for the Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife.

Source & full story: <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=181174&Sn=BNEW&IssueID=30046>

### **London firm named to design science museum (Miami,FL,USA)**

May 02, 2007, bY Daniel Chang, Miami Herald

The architectural competition to design the new, \$275 million Miami Science Museum in Bicentennial Park concluded Wednesday in a near photo finish, with the museum's selection committee ranking as its first choice the London-based firm of Grimshaw Architects.

Key elements of the science museum include an aquarium spanning three floors, with mangroves and seagrass at the top, a tropical coral reef in the middle, and large sea creatures such as sharks and rays on the ground level. Other major features include an rooftop observatory, a 300-seat planetarium and a wildlife center, all on the also on the roof. Source & full story: <http://www.miamiherald.com/416/story/94487.html>

### **Plan would reroute Lake O water (Palm Beach,FL,USA)**

May 02, 2007, by Jason Schultz, Palm Beach Post

STUART — Environmentalists and Martin County commissioners hope the south shall flood

again - at least the land south of Lake Okeechobee - in order to clean up the St. Lucie River.

Commissioners unanimously endorsed a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposal that would restore a natural flow-way for storm water to drain south out of Lake Okeechobee into the Everglades instead of being released into the river. Heavy lake releases in recent years have polluted the St. Lucie River and endangered fish, oysters and seagrass. That plan faces major hurdles as well. It would require buying 140,000 acres for storing storm water and relocating a sugar mill in the path of the flow-way.

Source & full story:

[http://www.palmbeachpost.com/politics/content/local\\_news/epaper/2007/05/02/m5b\\_mclakeo\\_0](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/politics/content/local_news/epaper/2007/05/02/m5b_mclakeo_0)

### ***Trench War: Desal pipeline angers many (Sydney,NSW,Australia)***

May 1, 2007, By Murray Trembath, The Leader - St. George Sutherland Shire Leader

A four metre-deep trench will be dug across the bottom of Botany Bay from Kurnell to Kyeemagh to allow twin pipes from the desalination plant to be embedded.

The full effects of the \$1.8 billion project, revealed in the report which was released quietly on Anzac Day, have dismayed residents, environmentalists and council leaders. Dredges will gouge more than a million cubic metres of sand from the floor of the bay in an eight-kilometre arc. The base of the trench will be about four metres deep and eight metres wide, with battered slopes leading to a trench footprint of about 48 metres wide.

The report claims there will be no significant impact on wave patterns, water quality, aquatic ecology or fishing. "Construction will impact on 35 hectares, which is 1 per cent of the overall area of Botany Bay, of which about 32 hectares are unvegetated sand habitat," the report said. 'Along the whole route, the total area of seagrass to be removed will be 2.6 hectares. 'This is less than half of 1 per cent of the existing seagrass along the southern shore (0.45 per cent) and of all existing seagrass in Botany Bay (0.42 per cent)."

Source & full story: [http://www.theleader.com.au/2007/05/trench\\_war\\_desal\\_pipeline\\_ange.php](http://www.theleader.com.au/2007/05/trench_war_desal_pipeline_ange.php)

### ***Stormwater cocktail killing our coastline (Adelaide,South Australia,Australia)***

April 30, 2007, by Clare Peddie, Advertiser Adelaide

THE Environmental Protection Authority water quality guidelines allow stormwater and wastewater to carry sediment and pollution out to sea. University of Adelaide marine biologist Associate Professor Sean Connell says "most scientists in this state" consider the current guidelines inadequate. More sediment and pollution is allowed into the sea here than in other states.

Our guidelines at least should be equal to, if not lower than, those in other states, he said. Authority principal water quality adviser, David Duncan, admits the levels are set higher than in other states but they are "mandatory compliance limits".

The decline of kelp forests and seagrass meadows, meanwhile, has progressed to such an extent Associate Professor Connell said some areas showed total "ecosystem collapse". "There are whole swathes of rock out there where there is virtually nothing living on it except very short weedy species," he said. "Other species haven't replenished themselves. "Fish associated with the kelp forests are strongly affected and organisms that use kelp forests for the juvenile stages." Recycling stormwater and wastewater would have benefits for the marine environment by reducing oversupply of nutrients and sediments, he said.

Source & full story: <http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,21641849-2682,00.html>

### ***Chesapeake's SAV acreage down 25%; lowest level since 1989 (Seven Valleys,PA,USA)***

April 26 2007, By Karl Blankenship, The Chesapeake Bay Journal

The Chesapeake lost a quarter of its underwater grasses last year, with the Baywide acreage falling to its lowest level since 1989, according to figures from the latest annual survey. The survey turned up some good news—the Susquehanna Flats, the largest bed in the Bay, remained intact despite a late June deluge that smothered much of the Bay with sediment.

But many other areas suffered extensive losses. Among the hardest hit were areas in high-salinity regions dominated by eelgrass, which suffered a massive die-off, apparently triggered by warm temperatures. Bay grasses in other areas were whipsawed between dry conditions in the spring and near-record river flows from a long rainy stretch in June.

“The fact is, last year was a year in which a lot of plants just didn’t make it,” said Bob Orth, a seagrass expert at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science who conducts an annual aerial survey of the Bay’s grass beds.

Overall, the survey counted just 59,090 acres of grasses, down from 78,263 acres in 2005. That’s just a third of the Bay Program’s restoration goal of 185,000 acres. The annual Baywide grass estimate is derived from an analysis of more than 2,000 black-and-white aerial photographs taken between May and October.

Source & full story: <http://www.bayjournal.com/article.cfm?article=3082>

### ***Saltwater Anglers Can Expect Good Year (Dallas,TX,USA)***

April 24, 2007, by Texas Parks and Wildlife, Lone Star Outdoor News

Fisheries biologists forecast angler success by analyzing the previous year’s sampling and survey data. Sampling is conducted using gill nets, bag seines and trawls; surveys of anglers are conducted throughout the year.

The resulting data set has been called the largest and best such collection of information on coastal fisheries in the world and received high marks in an independent scientific review by scientists from the American Fisheries Society.

“Overall, our data show our inshore saltwater fisheries to be in excellent shape,” said Larry McKinney, Ph.D., director of TPWD’s Coastal Fisheries Division. “Texas bays continue to provide world-class angling opportunities, and we are hopeful that recent changes in regulations — including last year’s seagrass conservation measure in Redfish Bay and the upcoming spotted seatrout bag limit change in the lower Laguna — will help continue that trend.”

Source & full story: <http://www.lonestaroutdoornews.com/content/view/86/26/>

### ***Controversial project receives rare rebukes (St. Petersburg,FL,USA)***

April 24, 2007, By CRAIG PITTMAN, St. Petersburg Times

State and federal permitting agencies rejected a St. Petersburg surgeon's plans for the Magnolia Bay development in Taylor County and will deny permits unless he makes major changes.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which issues federal permits for wetland destruction, said it relied heavily on a conclusion by the state Department of Environmental Protection that Pruitt's project is "not in the public interest." The plans for turning Boggy Bay into Magnolia Bay call for filling in more than 100 acres of the wetlands and blasting a channel for the marina 2 miles long and 100 feet wide through the preserve's seagrass beds.

Pruitt has said the channel is essential to making the development financially feasible, and that his plan to transplant all the sea grass to other spots is a sign of how environmentally beneficial the development will be.

Source & full story: [http://www.sptimes.com/2007/04/24/State/Controversial\\_project.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2007/04/24/State/Controversial_project.shtml)

Related story: <http://www.gainesville.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?>

[AID=/20070424/LOCAL/70424008/-1/news](http://www.tbo.com/news/nationworld/MGBDWC2SV0F.html)

### ***Seagrasses On Rebound (Tampa,FL,USA)***

April 24, 2007, By MIKE SALINERO The Tampa Tribune

TAMPA - Seagrasses were once an endangered species in Tampa Bay. The aquatic plants that shelter juvenile fish and shellfish were practically snuffed out during the 1960s and '70s by poorly treated sewage, industrial waste and dredge-and-fill operations.

Seagrasses have revived, however, and now cover more Bay bottom than at any time since 1950. The latest map completed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District shows seagrasses increased by 1,275 acres between 2004 and 2006, a gain of nearly 5 percent. Seagrasses now cover nearly 28,300 acres across the 400-square-mile Bay, the most since 40,400 acres were identified in aerial photographs taken in 1950.

Holly Greening, lead scientist at the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, said the increasing seagrass acreage is due to clearer water. Like most other plants, seagrasses need sunlight to grow. Algae blooms, fueled by nutrients such as nitrogen, can block the sunlight, killing the grasses. Greening said scientists measure water clarity two ways. One is the amount of chlorophyll A, an indicator of algae, in the water. The other is measuring how deep light penetrates through the water.

The estuary program has targets for both of these measures that indicate ideal conditions for seagrass growth. In 2006, all segments of the Bay met both targets, the first time that's happened since 1975.

Source & full story: <http://www.tbo.com/news/nationworld/MGBDWC2SV0F.html>

### ***Foundation undertakes first event (Basseterre,St. Kitts and Nevis)***

April 19, 2007, SKNVibes.com

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, WEST INDIES. Auberge Resorts and partners join The Ocean Foundation to announce the creation of the St. Kitts Foundation Fund, to be dedicated to preserving the natural coastal environment of St. Kitts and supporting social and economic programs of benefit to the community. The partnership is currently master-planning 2,400 acres on the island's southeast peninsula as a sustainably developed luxury resort community.

Two expert US-based organizations, REEF and Reef Relief, will lead local divers in on-land trainings and in-water surveys. A third US-based organization, Earth Echo International and its Executive Director Philippe Cousteau, will be documenting the coral-damaging sediment from soil erosion and nutrient runoff caused by over-grazing and over-abundance of feral animals such as goats for Living on Earth, a weekly environmental news and information program distributed by Public Radio International.

Activities planned and tentative schedule: Training symposium on fish identification and coral reef disease SCUBA diving surveys from boats (fish counts, reef assessments, seagrass bed sampling, water testing, mooring placement assessment, underwater video and photography) Educational presentations in local primary schools on protecting coral reefs The St. Kitts Foundation's activities will be supervised by an independent advisory committee of members selected by The Ocean Foundation and will determine charitable initiatives and award grants for conservation and community-based programs. Mark J. Spalding, J.D., President of The Ocean Foundation will serve as Executive Director of the St. Kitts Foundation, and Kaya Freeman, an expert on international marine policy, has been appointed Program Officer for the St. Kitts Foundation.

Source & full story: <http://www.sknvibes.com/News/NewsDetails.cfm/2749>

### ***Money from oil spill to restore seashore (Orlando,FL,USA)***

April 23, 2007, Central Florida News

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico A fund to compensate Puerto Rico for damages from a 1994 oil spill will be used to build an artificial reef, create a shoreline nature reserve and restore the walls of a Spanish colonial fort, trustees said Sunday.

The nearly \$10 million for restoration projects was included in a settlement involving those responsible for a barge that ran aground off the coast of San Juan, spilling 750,000 gallons of heavy oil. For weeks, the oil slick stained beaches and lagoons around the capital's reef-fringed coast.

In an effort to restore sea-life habitats, cement modules will be installed in a lagoon one mile from the grounding site to create a reef. Marine sediment will also be used to fill dredge holes and boost the recovery of seagrass.

On Jan. 7, 1994, the Morris J. Berman barge spilled half its load of heating oil when it smashed into a coral reef. Under a 2000 settlement with the U.S. government, the Caribbean Petroleum Corp. and two insurers had to reimburse federal and local governments for removing the oil from beaches and Caribbean waters.

Source & full story: <http://www.miamiherald.com/579/story/83362.html>

Related story: <http://www.localnewsleader.com/olberlin/stories/index.php?action=fullnews&id=99167>

### ***Title to sea bottom poses no threat (Bradenton,FL,USA)***

April 22, 2007, Bradenton Herald

The Port of Tampa, in Hillsborough County, owns most of Tampa Bay - from the port on the eastern shore all the way west to Egmont Key, except for a portion on the west owned by Pinellas County and the area east of the shipping channel serving Port Manatee. The latter is owned by the state of Florida. A bill in the Legislature plans to transfer ownership of that small sliver of bottomland, about 585 acres, from the state to Port Manatee for a token sum of \$1. Horror of horrors, the evil port will rape the bottomlands, they claim in denouncing Rep. Ron Reagan's House bill to facilitate the transfer.

What this transfer would do is give the port some authority to regulate activity in the water in and around its facilities. That would include power boats traversing the seagrass beds the port has transplanted at great expense to mitigate loss of grasses in the recent widening of the channel and expansion of docks. As any fisherman knows, boat propellers can tear the heck out of a shallow seagrass flat. Port officials would like to limit boat traffic off their shores to non-combustion power - rowboats and sailboats.

Currently they have no jurisdiction to do so. The state agencies responsible for protecting fragile marine environments are thinly stretched over thousands of miles of coastline. The chances of a Fish & Game agent catching a flat despoiler in the act are slim.

Source & full story: <http://www.bradenton.com/196/story/29223.html>

### ***Even after noxious algae dies off, toxins left in seagrasses can kill manatees. (Sarasota,FL,USA)***

April 22, 2007, By Kate Spinner, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

When 27 manatees died from red tide poisons near the Caloosahatchee River in March and April, there were no signs of a red tide bloom. But toxins from an earlier bloom settled into seagrass beds near Fort Myers, and the grasses stayed poisonous for weeks. As the weather warmed, manatees migrated out of their river wintering grounds and ate the deadly grass.

Because scientists are just beginning to realize that red tide can render seagrass toxic weeks after a bloom passes, few solutions have been proposed to make spring migration for manatees less deadly.

Scientists have long suspected that the manatees die from red tide by consuming the toxins. Years ago, however, they thought manatees got exposed by eating sea squirts, which often

inhabit grassy areas and accumulate toxins similar to shellfish. Research is showing that the chemicals either cling to the grasses or become absorbed by them. Sea squirts could still be a factor.

Source & full story: <http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070422/NEWS/704220314>

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## GALLERY

### **Noumea (New Caledonia): 01 May 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

In early May, Len McKenzie (Seagrass-Watch HQ) took leave and visited New Caledonia to attend the GeoHab2007 conference and explore the potential for expanding Seagrass-Watch into the French territory. A possible long-term monitoring site was examined on the intertidal reef-flat east of the Le Meridien resort, Anse Vata (Noumea). The site was dominated by *Halodule uninervis* and *Cymodocea serrulata* (minor patches of *Thalassia hemprichii* and *Halophila ovalis*). Epiphyte cover was very high (>80%), and holothurians were abundant. The reef-flat was also a popular location for fishing and gleaning.

### **Bowen (Qld): 27 April 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Jane Mellors (Seagrass-Watch HQ) in collaboration with the Bowen State School established and monitored a new site at Front Beach, Port Denison (BW1). The site is a mix of *Halodule uninervis* and *Zostera capricorni* which will test the identification skills of the students. There were also small amounts of *Halophila ovalis* - all great dugong tucker. The students were amazed at the number of animals that call this meadow home, they even identified some dugong feeding trails a first for quite a few of them. This site will be monitored by the Year 7 students as part of their Environmental, Reef Guardianship Program.

### **Cyrene Reef (Singapore), 21 April 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Another dawn arrival by the intrepid Team on this submerged reef near Singapore's container terminal. It was a lean team that landed for the first TeamSeagrass monitoring of this very grassy reef. The seagrasses are full of life! We spotted a baby Knobbly sea star. At Transect 2, the seagrasses were crawling with white sea urchins, some gathered together in big piles. It was hard to walk without stepping on them. These urchins also 'carry' things such as shells, bits of debris. Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore.

### **Chek Jawa (Singapore): 22 April 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

TeamSeagrass was back on the shore for an early tide. We gathered at Changi Jetty as dawn broke, and headed sleepily out to Pulau Ubin. Shortly, we are all ready to monitor. This after Shufen explains the New and Improved Field boxes for keeping track of equipment. The seagrasses were certainly doing very well in the area. With lots of healthy *Halophila spinulosa*. As well as thickets of other seagrasses like *Halophila ovalis* and *Halodule* sp. Siti noted that the seagrasses on the seaward side were HUGE and were growing thick and lush. There's certainly lots of food at Chek Jawa for hungry migrating dugongs passing through Singapore. Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore.

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## FROM HQ

### **Virtual Herbarium** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/herbarium.html>

**Giveaways** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html#GIVE1>

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Seagrass Biology
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (hardcopy)

**Future sampling dates** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>**Seagrass-Watch News Issue 28** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>**Handy Seagrass Links** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/links.html>

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Seagrass-Watch E- Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.