

Seagrass-Watch HQ

From: Seagrass-Watch HQ [hq@seagrasswatch.org]
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To: Seagrass-Watch HQ
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11 February 2007

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest.

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www.seagrasswatch.org

NEWS

Poison run-off killing Reef: Study says small quantities of pesticides are dangerous (Queensland, Australia)

Cairns Post, Thursday, February 8, 2007

Pesticide run-off is putting Australia's fragile coral reefs at greater risk of destruction, according to a scientific study. The study, published in the Marine Ecology Progress Series journal, shows corals on the Great Barrier Reef are being harmed by agricultural chemicals, even in small quantities.

Scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the ARC Centre of Excellence for Reef Studies and James Cook University say pesticides are so poisonous that they can prevent coral spawning, and affect the reef's ability to regenerate and protect itself. They have warned that chemicals combined with rising sea temperatures caused by global warming may result in the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and farmers are involved in a 10-year, \$40 million Reef Water Quality Protection Plan to improve land management practices in the catchment area. Seagrass-Watch is a component of the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan..... *more*
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Measures taken to prevent repeated blue-green algae outbreak (Western Australia)

ABC News Online, Monday, February 5, 2007

The Department of Environment will set up new management regimes for Broome's Roebuck Bay to try to avoid a repeat of the current algal bloom. The blue-green algae, commonly known as 'mermaid hair', is smothering seagrass and threatening marine and bird life for the second year in a row. The department says samples of the algae sent to Queensland will be tested to gauge its level of toxicity. Spokesman Troy Sinclair believes excessive nutrients washing into

the bay could be to blame.

Seagrass-Watch HQ is currently working with Local Seagrass-Watch Coordinator Daniel Baines to establish seagrass monitoring with Environs Kimberley in Roebuck Bay..... [more](#)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Gulf of Carpentaria in zinc spill scare (Gulf of Carpentaria, Australia)

Thursday, 8 February , 2007 Louise Willis (ABC Local Radio)

In the muddied waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria in Australia's far north, a 5,000 tonne barge damaged by tropical Cyclone Nelson is in danger of sinking with its full load and causing an environmental disaster. Local environmental and Aboriginal groups are outraged, saying the mining company responsible for the barge has been warned about its operations for years.

As the category two cyclone bore down on the Queensland coast, huge seas disabled a minerals barge in the Gulf and forced its crew to call for help. The barge was ferrying zinc ore from the Zinifex mine to bulk carriers waiting further offshore. The crew is safe on board another ship and authorities are now focusing their efforts on stopping the barge from sinking, or spilling its load into the water. General Manager of the Zinifex Mine, Greg McMillan, says he's confident the barge will be saved.

The incident has outraged local Aboriginal activist Murrandoo Yanner. "We are extremely concerned the fact that this ship is sinking with 5,000 tonnes of toxic zinc on one of the largest grass beds, as in Dugong sea turtles, seagrass beds in the region in extremely concerning" Mr Yanner said.

The fishing industry is also concerned. Gary Ward from the Gulf Fishermen's Association. "Should that go into the environment, it basically would close down the fishing industry in the Gulf of Carpentaria straight away." Mr Ward said.

Source & full story: <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s1842873.htm>

Trouble with a sea pig (Queensland, Australia)

February 08, 2007 11:00pm By Greg Stolz (Courier Mail)

Never mind the potentially deadly sharks and polar bears – it's the apparently not-so-docile dugongs that you have to watch out for at Sea World.

In a bizarre accident, a Sea World diver was admitted to hospital yesterday after a run-in with Pig, one of the Gold Coast theme park's two resident dugongs. The diver was cleaning the dugong tank when "Pig" became entangled in his SCUBA equipment. The startled animal, which weighs close to 250kg, had then "taken off" while still attached to the diver, Sea World marine sciences manager Steve McCourt said.

The diver was taken by ambulance to the Gold Coast Hospital with suspected spinal injuries but was later given the all-clear. Mr McCourt said dugongs, known as the "cows of the sea" because of their penchant for grazing on seagrass, were non-aggressive herbivores and the incident was a freak accident.

The diver wasn't the only casualty from the incident. Pig, who was rescued sick and underweight from an Ingham beach in 1998, also suffered a slight cut. But by yesterday afternoon, he had recovered sufficiently to tuck into his daily meal of 100kg of lettuce.

Source & full story: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,21194321-3102,00.html>

HECO Looking to Solve Seagrass Problem (Honolulu, USA)

February 6, 2007 03:41 PM By Stephen Florino (KHNL)

Hawaiian Electric is trying to find a solution to a problem with seagrass growing outside its Kahe Power plant. The aquatic plant almost caused HECO to turn off the power in parts of the island.

"Very unusual situation," said Peter Rosegg, HECO spokesman. "In all the years Kahe Power plant has been there, we've never seen that before." Last Thursday, kona winds and big waves ripped out tons of seagrass from the ocean floor, clogging the intake valves for the plant. "We've never ever seen this particular seagrass," said Rosegg. "We never seen anything to the degree or the amount or frequency that this stuff came in."

The alfalfa sprout looking seagrass filled the valves every 20-minutes. Crews pulled out enough to fill more than six containers. HECO immediately called botanists at University of Hawaii. "It's partly environmental problem because it is an environmental element," said Rosegg. "We wanna protect our equipment, and it's partly engineering problem. How do we get this stuff from getting into our equipment."

Jellyfish and marine debris clogged the intake valves before. And now, HECO will be researching other scenarios as well. "You're always contending with the forces of nature, so we hope it won't happen again," said Rosegg. But Murphy's Law says if you don't plan for it to happen again, you're gonna be caught.

The intake valve works to cool the plant's generators. HECO officials say even before the seagrass problem, crews were cleaning the valves regularly, and constantly monitor them.

Source: <http://www.khnl.com/Global/story.asp?S=6042640>

Clam Bay sea-grass die-off topic of March workshop (Naples, Florida, USA)

February 9, 2007 By Eric Staats (Naples Daily News)

The Naples City Council plans a workshop in early March on a sea grass die-off in Outer Clam Bay that has been a sore spot between city residents in Seagate and the Pelican Bay neighbourhood north of the city limits.

The workshop, tentatively set for March 5, would be the first official involvement by the City Council in ongoing talk of what caused the die-off and how to fix it. Collier County is proposing to hire a seagrass expert to conduct a \$40,000 study of the die-off, which has occurred as Pelican Bay has worked to restore a dying mangrove forest on that neighbourhood's western edge.

Seagate Homeowners Association President David Buser has blamed the Pelican Bay Services Division, an arm of county government, for not paying enough attention to the fate of sea grasses in the same ecosystem. A Collier County study in 1994 estimated that Outer Clam Bay had some 10 acres of sea grass. Monitors working on the mangrove restoration for Pelican Bay estimate in a report presented this week that between three and four acres of seagrasses survive there.

Source:

http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/feb/09/clam_bay_seagrass_die_topic_march_workshop_latest

Monitors seek better tracking of sea grass (Naples, Florida, USA)

February 8, 2007 By Eric Staats (Naples Daily News)

Monitors proposed Wednesday to boost efforts to keep track of seagrasses in Outer Clam Bay in the wake of a die-off that is prompting calls for restoration. More than 50 percent of seagrasses in Outer Clam Bay have died off since 1994 north of the Seagate neighbourhood

amid efforts by neighbouring Pelican Bay to restore a dying mangrove forest in the same estuary on Pelican Bay's western edge.

Turrell & Associates ecologist Tim Hall proposed to the board of the Pelican Bay Services Division, which oversees a taxing district that is helping pay for the mangrove restoration, to increase the number of seagrass monitoring transects from nine to 25 or 30. Turrell & Associates already works on the mangrove restoration for the Services Division.

The additional monitoring would put in place a more systematic grid pattern that would fill in gaps in seagrass data in Outer Clam Bay, Hall said. The monitoring comes as Collier County weighs hiring seagrass expert Dave Tomasko to study the sea grass die-off and recommend measures to fix it.

Monitoring sea grasses in Outer Clam Bay has been complicated by the shifting nature of seagrass beds, inconsistent survey methods and differences in the way different monitors might assess the size of a seagrass bed.

Source & full story:

http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/feb/08/monitors_seek_better_tracking_sea_grass/?local_news

What's causing seagrass to die off? (Naples, Florida, USA)

February 6, 2007 By Eric Staats (Naples Daily News)

When Mike Bauer went snorkelling in Outer Clam Bay north of the Seagate neighbourhood last fall, he was surprised at what he found. The water was so cloudy, he had to put his face 2 inches from the bottom to see it, and when he did, he didn't see much living there, Bauer, the city of Naples' natural resources manager, said. Bauer's look below the surface confirmed what people living in Seagate have been seeing for years: Outer Clam Bay is in decline. Mats of algae float on the bay's surface. At least half of the bay's seagrass beds have disappeared since 1994, reports show. Some seagrass counts put the toll much higher.

A 1994 report by Collier County found 10 acres of seagrasses in Outer Clam Bay. In 1997, a Pelican Bay study found 7 acres of seagrasses. Annual reports by Pelican Bay consultants kept reporting the 7-acre figure until 2000, when seagrasses dropped to 5.1 acres. Monitoring in 2006 found between 3 and 4 acres of sea grasses in Outer Clam Bay, Turrell & Associates ecologist Tim Hall said.

The county is proposing to hire former Southwest Florida Water Management District scientist Dave Tomasko, now a watershed assessment project manager for a private consultant in Tampa, to undertake the study. Tomasko has proposed a \$40,000 study over four months, including interviewing stakeholders, collecting data on the depth and distribution of seagrasses in Outer Clam Bay, setting potential water clarity goals, modelling pollutant loads from the Clam Bay watershed and developing an action plan. Both Seagate Property Owners Association and Pelican Bay leaders have endorsed the study.

Source & full story: http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/feb/06/disappearing_act/?local_news.

Students compete at science (Melbourne, Florida, USA)

February 3, 2007 BY KATE BRENNAN (FLORIDA TODAY)

Madelyn Little was all nerves Friday morning as she explained how Brevard County residents could help keep pollutants out of the Indian River.

"People need to monitor their septic tanks, and if you live near the river, you should limit the amount of fertilizers you use on your lawn," the 15-year-old said. By reducing harmful runoff, Madelyn, a Bayside High sophomore, said the levels of nitrate and phosphate in the river would

decrease, allowing seagrass to reproduce at a faster rate. Increasing the amount of seagrass in the river is critical, said Madelyn, because it's home to 70 percent of marine organisms.

Madelyn was one of 240 students who began the first of three middle and high school science and engineering fairs Friday at the Melbourne Square mall. The two-day fair features students from 13 South Brevard schools, including public, private and charter schools. For students, the fair culminates months of research, experiments and analysis and gives them a venue to showcase their work. It also marks a high-stakes competition, where students contend for a spot at the state science fair in April and international science fair in May. "It's a great real-world experience for the students," said Ginger Davis, a science resource teacher who coordinates the fairs. "The students get to ask real scientific questions and go out and find the answers."

About 100 volunteer judges, including Harris and NASA employees, pharmacists and computer analysts, evaluated students' projects Friday. They assessed how well students followed scientific procedures, kept records and logs and used results to formalize conclusions. They'll make their final determinations today, before announcing winners during an awards ceremony after the fair.

Although Madelyn is hoping for her second shot at the state competition -- she went last year for a project on dolphins -- she said raising awareness about the importance of a clean river is more important than winning awards. "I'm hoping to win, but if nothing else, I want to let people know what's happening with our ecosystem and how they can help fix it," she said.

Source: <http://www.floridatoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070203/NEWS01/702030327>.

Algiers Beach becomes Algae Beach (Sanibel Island, Gulf of Mexico, Florida, USA)

February 02, 2007 By KEVIN LOLLAR

Ruth Higgins was appalled earlier this week by the dense carpet of drift algae at Sanibel's Algiers Beach. Thirty feet wide in places and 2 to 3 feet deep, the algae stretched for miles, clumped and matted like red dreadlocks. "I've been coming here since before there was a causeway, and I've never seen anything like this," said Higgins, 86, of Buffalo, N.Y. "I don't like it at all. It's very disappointing. This is not the Sanibel I knew as Sanibel."

Brian Lapointe, of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Fort Pierce, was more excited about the algae. "I'm fortunate that I came over to Sanibel today. This is by far the worst I've ever seen on Sanibel," said Lapointe, an algae expert. Sifting through the mass, Lapointe rattled off the names of 15 different species of algae. While green algal species were in the mix, the most by far were red drift algae. County scientists started seeing thick coats of red drift algae on artificial reefs late last spring. Turbulence caused by strong weekend winds probably tore the algae on the beach from the reefs.

"After the hurricanes of 2004, a big slug of nitrogen flowed into coastal waters," Lapointe said. "You have a fast-growing area with a lot of sewage. Also, the Caloosahatchee is draining agricultural lands, and you have water from Lake Okeechobee, which gets nitrogen-rich water from the Kissimmee Valley. So with the sewage and the agricultural runoff, you get a double whammy."

While red drift algae clog Tarpon Bay, which is part of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, a nasty green alga is fouling much of the refuge's other waterways. "During the growing season, it grows incredibly fast," refuge manager Rob Jess said. "It has established itself, so it takes less nutrients. We've seen our seagrass beds decline by half in the past two years. The fishing is down. The mullet aren't here. The wilderness area has been tremendously devastated." Jess said the algae is a mess. "We're in a long-term decline," he said. "If this continues, we're going to have a sterile environment out here."

Source and article: <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007702010364>.

Roebuck Bay under threat from algae (Western Australia)

January 29, 2007, The West online

An algal bloom has invaded a 4km stretch of Broome's iconic Roebuck Bay, prompting concerns the outbreak could damage the fragile marine habitat, a vital feeding ground for dugongs and hundreds of thousands of migrating birds.

The blue-green alga *Lyngbya*, commonly known as mermaid's hair, is believed to be the culprit, smothering the bay's mud flats for the second year in a row. Authorities are unsure of the cause of the bloom, its consequences and what should be done to respond to the outbreak.

Environs Kimberley director Maria Mann said local environmental groups would meet the council to discuss the bloom. "It is only going to get worse and worse unless the shire does something about stormwater run-off," she said..... [more](#)

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

New red tide species detected off Sepanggar (Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia)

January 21, 2007 DAILY EXPRESS NEWS

Marine scientists at the Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI) of Universiti Malaysia Sabah have identified a new species of red tide in Sepanggar Bay.

Prof. Datin Dr Ann Anton, who heads the harmful algal bloom (HAB) research group at BMRI, disclosed that scientists are studying the recent red tide in order to determine the factors that caused them and eventually to examine the ways and means of preventing the blooming of harmful algal species. The on-going studies include finding innovative methods of identifying the species for early detection of the blooms, studying the ecology of the red tide species and measuring the ocean currents, which help in dispersing the red tide blooms. Seagrass-Watch has monitoring sites in Sepanggar Bay..... [more](#) <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Vessel on its way out of bay (Manatee, Florida, USA)

January 27, 2007 HERALD STAFF REPORT

Soon, a wrecked paddlewheeler that's been drifting around Sarasota Bay south of the Cortez Bridge will no longer be a menace to humans and habitat.

Manatee County's Conservation Lands Management Department said Friday it has retained a marine contractor to remove what's left of the 60-foot Henry Flagler and its debris from the bay bottom. Officials say removal of the boat, long familiar to those who frequent the Intracoastal Waterway, will begin next week, depending upon the weather and tides.

Through a process of repeated floating and settling, the Flagler has caused substantial damage to several large sections of seagrass in the area. Aerial photographs show several 1,800-square-foot "footprints" where the ship laid upon the seagrass in the past.

"It's been in that area for six, seven years and has changed hands a number of times," Hipp said. Since the boat is rapidly deteriorating, even larger areas of pristine seagrass could be threatened by its spreading debris field. "The hull is to the point it's going to fall apart," Hipp said. "Because it's so shallow there, we don't want it to make any additional impact to any grasses. It has killed several seagrass beds already."

The county has entered discussions with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to restore the damaged seagrass.

Source & full story: <http://www.bradenton.com/mld/bradenton/news/local/16558148.htm>

Anchors Away With RFID Smartbuoys (Italy)

January 8, 2007 By Nicole Martinelli (Wired News - USA)

A new electronic mooring system billed as a boon for pampered boaters is also good for the environment since it eliminates the need for dropping a coral-killing anchor.

The Italian-engineered MarPark (mare means sea in Italian) system, launched on an experimental basis last summer in a few protected areas in Liguria and Sardinia, lets boaters cruise into idyllic bays and hook a rope with a rubber ring to a smartbuoy. Simple as that, they're safely harbored, no anchor necessary.

And that's just the start. If they've reserved a water taxi or need supplies or services, a microchip in their SeaPass ring relays that info to an onshore service center. A text message reassures the skipper via mobile phone that all systems are go.

Environmental group Legambiente got on board the MarPark project, with patent holder Italgest Mare and technical partner Siemens Italia, to promote sustainable tourism in some of the prettiest coves of the boot country. After monitoring effects on pioneer coral and Posidonia sea grass in test areas, Legambiente was pleased enough by the trial run to give MarPark its 2006 innovation award.

With environmentalists' benediction, vacationers will be able to MarPark next summer in swanky Costa Smeralda's Porto Cervo and Cala di Volpe as well as areas in Otranto (Puglia) and Greek isle Corfu. By 2009, some 20 protected areas will use the system.

Source & full story: http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,72629-0.html?tw=wn_technology_3.

18 manatees found dead, linked to eating laced seagrass (Florida, USA)

December 08, 2006, news-press.com

Eighteen manatee carcasses have been recovered in the Ten Thousand Islands area of Everglades National Park since Nov. 9, and scientists think the animals died from eating red tide-laced seagrass. Most of the dead manatees were recovered around Chevelier and Huston bays, but some were found as far south as Lostman's River.

Since July, 24 manatees from Pinellas County to Lee County are suspected to have died from red tide poisoning. Researchers recently discovered that manatees can die from eating seagrass laced with red tide toxin weeks or months after a red tide bloom. Before that, red tide had been thought to kill manatees only when they inhale the toxin at the water's surface..... [more http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

GALLERY

Semakau (Singapore): 04 February 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

"Pulau Semakau. Better known as our nation's landfill but home to a vast meadow of seagrass, stretching over 2km in length. To get to Pulau Semakau, we take a boat from West Coast Pier. Team Seagrass gets right to work on the boat labelling the aluminium stakes that are to mark our transect points at the three (yes, THREE) sites at Semakau." Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore. TeamSeagrass Website <http://teamseagrass.blogspot.com/>

FROM HQ

Training Workshop 26th February - Thursday Island (Torres Strait)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Seagrass Watch HQ in conjunction with the Land & Sea Management Unit (TSRA) will be conducting a training workshop for Indigenous Rangers from Torres Strait and Mornington Island (Gulf of Carpentaria) on Monday Feb 26 - PKA Hall Thursday Island. Enquiries to Jane Mellors (ph 07 47222655 fax 07 47782970 mob 0417076309 Email jane.mellors@dpi.qld.gov.au) or Miya Isherwood (ph 4069 2957).

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

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Manual for Assessing Fish Stocks on Pacific Corral Reefs
- Seagrass Biology
- Bookmarks
- Stickers

Future sampling dates <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 27 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

Handy Seagrass Links <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/links.html>

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