

Seagrass-Watch HQ

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

13 June 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

Madrid moves to protect Spain from urban development (Orgiva, Granada, Spain)

June 11th, 2007, Olive Press

The Government has introduced a law to stop local town halls reclassifying protected land and concreting over more of Spain's dwindling coastline. The Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Law is to have a wider jurisdiction than the existing Conservation of Natural Spaces legislation (1989). At a cost of 20 million euros, one quarter of Spain's surface area will become untouchable if the tough new measures are passed by parliament later this year.

Madrid also intends to include marine territory in the new law's jurisdiction to protect the country's sea life from the damaging effects of pollution and fishing. The news comes as green group Ecologistas en Accion has asked the European Union to investigate the loss of one-million square metres of seagrass meadow destroyed in waters off the Costa del Sol in recent years by over-fishing.

Source & full story: <http://www.theolivepress.es/2007/06/11/madrid-moves-to-protect-spain-from-urban-development/>

RP's first commercial hatchery for sea cucumber to rise in Dagupan (Philippines)

June 11 2007, Bayanihan.org

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) is building the country's first-ever commercial hatchery for sea cucumber to enhance massive raising of the commodity nationwide. This marks the country's first effort ever to boost the production of this commodity after it already ranked eighth among the Philippine fishery exports today. The sea cucumber hatchery, to become the source of juveniles to be disseminated to various coastal areas of the country, is now rising at the 24-hectare National Integrated Fisheries Technology Development Center in Dagupan City where the country's Philippine Bangus Center is also located.

"Beche-de-mer" is a valuable commodity not only as a delicacy found in many Chinese food but also as a raw material in chemical preparations. A multi-million dollar industry, "beche-de-mer" was supposed to have earned US\$ 1 million in 1992 that grew to US\$ 7 million in 2001. Price rate of dried meat is the U.S. is US\$ 180 to US\$ 250 per kilogram from the local processors to intermediaries.

The first commercial hatchery on sea cucumber is being put up by the BFAR with the help of the World Fish Center, the Australian-based ACIAR or Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and UPMSI. The BFAR said over 60 coastal municipalities in 14 regions of the country depend on sea cucumber fishery for livelihood. Sea cucumber is found in shallow waters inhabiting wide seagrass beds, soft bottom areas, and reefs. The dramatic decline of its population was due to unsustainable exploitation or gathering of the specie to be sold to local middlemen or for profit. (PNA)

Source & full story: <http://www.bayanihan.org/html/article.php/20070611151048144>

Glades Also Could See Pole And Troll Zones (Tampa, FL, USA)

June 10th 2007, By FRANK SARGEANT , TBO.com

Anglers on Little Cockroach Bay are not the only ones faced with large new pole and troll zone proposals these days. Currently, Everglades National Park is looking at a number of options to cut down habitat damage from powerboats running the backcountry, and one of them is making vast areas of the park into no-motor zones.

One of the most drastic proposals in ENP would make all water less than 3 feet deep into a pole and troll zone. This would put nearly all of the backcountry off limits for outboard operation, and effectively shut down fishing in tens of thousands of acres, since the distances to many of

the prime areas are too great to cover on a paddle, pushpole or electric motor.

Not all is gloom and doom as far as powerboaters are concerned; park managers say they are not trying to shut anglers out, just protect the habitat and avoid user conflicts, for example, between kayakers and flats boat fishermen. And some of the alternatives would simply be to better educate powerboaters about waters that offer safe depths for running, and areas to avoid due to seagrass, rocks or shallow water.

Source & full story: <http://sports.tbo.com/sports/MGBY6OSWQ2F.html>

After A Year, Coastal Seagrass Program Seems To Be Having An Impact (Tyler, TX, USA)

June 10th 2007, The Tyler Morning Telegraph

ROCKPORT - A year after the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission made it illegal to uproot seagrasses with a submerged propeller within the boundaries of the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area, local game wardens are calling compliance with the regulation "good."

The regulation - which went into effect last May 1 - marked the first time the TPW Commission used its proclamation power to protect coastal habitat and require changes in boater behavior in the popular fishing destination near Rockport and Aransas Pass.

"I think we still have some folks who are confused about what they can and cannot do out there," said TPWD Ecosystem Leader Karen Meador. "Anyone in any type of vessel can run anywhere within the scientific area; just don't uproot seagrasses or dig a prop scar." Meador, the lead fisheries biologist for the Aransas Bay System, said her staff - along with local game wardens - have been busy the past year educating the boating public about the new regulation and the importance of seagrass conservation.

Source & full story: <http://www.tylerpaper.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070610/SPORTS02/706090327>

Project Greenshores to receive marshes, wave breaks soon (Pensacola, FL, USA)

June, 8th 2007, By Sean Dugas, Pnj.com

Work should begin by the end of the month to construct salt marshes and wave breaks in the second phase of Project Greenshores on Pensacola Bay.

Project Greenshores is an effort by the state Department of Environmental Protection, with the help of city and county officials, to create breakwater reefs that slow wave action and help create a habitat for seagrass and salt marshes, said Jim Lappert, DEP ecosystem restoration manager.

Source & full story: <http://www.pensacolanejournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070608/NEWS01/706080339/1006>

Fish flee our warm water (Adelaide, South Australia)

June 08, 2007, By CARA JENKIN, The Advertiser

FISH commonly caught off South Australia's jetties could disappear as climate change forces them into colder, deeper waters. Environmentalists believe as global warming causes sea temperatures to rise, species which are now found off the coast, such as King George whiting, garfish or perch, may retreat from the coastline.

The CSIRO has predicted sea temperatures could rise by up to 1C by 2030 and 1.7C by 2070 as air temperatures rise up to 3.5C. Flinders University School of Biological Sciences Professor Peter Fairweather said scientists were concerned local fish would respond to the change by heading further into the Southern Ocean. He said temperatures were predicted to increase more rapidly in coming years compared to the past 50 years, which would probably prevent fish from acclimatising. Local seagrass is also expected to die in warmer waters, which would reduce the food source for fish.

Source & full story: <http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,21868378-2682,00.html>

Dredging to begin on deep channel for Sebastian Inlet (Jupiter, FL, USA)

June 7, 2007, By ELLIOTT JONES, TCPalm

SEBASTIAN — A 2-mile-long line of flashing nighttime beacons and large floats are being extended across scenic Indian River Lagoon here. Dredging of the three-quarter-mile long channel is to last 30 to 45 days. But solving the problem is expensive: \$3 million, one-third of which is because of the project's environmental consequences, principally disruption of seagrass beds. Concern about protecting the grasses — that scientists say are vital to marine life — has held up the work for years, said Marty Smithson, director of the Sebastian Inlet District that is doing the project.

To finally get approval, sea grass in the channel's way had to be dug up and transplanted to neighboring areas. At least 36 caution signs for boaters will be arrayed outside the channel to keep boaters off the seagrass beds.

Source & full story: http://www1.tcpalm.com/tcp/local_news/article/0,2545,TCP_16736_5573770,00.html

National strategy plea (Manama,Bahrain)

7th June 2007 Gulf Daily News

A CALL for a national plan to reduce the threat to Bahrain's marine turtles went out yesterday. Bahrain Centre for Studies and Research (BCSR) head of fisheries studies, Dr Ebrahim Abdulqader said their natural movements from sea to land exposed them to many dangers, while fishing practices and coastal developments were also placing them at risk.

He said the plan should specify improvements in fishing operations and the introduction of technology that would save turtles from nets, similar to that now used in many other countries.

Dr Abdulqader said the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had categorised all seven species of marine turtles among the red list of internationally threatened species. "Coastal development activities in the marine habitat may contribute to the continuous reduction of the sea grass beds, which are the feeding grounds for the dominant green turtle," he said.

Source & full story: <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=184279&Sn=BNEW&IssueID=30079>

Region's estuaries get 'fair' rating (Parksville,British Columbia,Canada)

June 06, 2007, By JOE SAUNDERS, Parksville Qualicum News

Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay are in "fair" condition, according to a report released Tuesday by the Environmental Protection Agency. But for local environmentalists, fair isn't good enough. "We're still getting C's across the board," said Stuart DeCew, the regional representative for the national Sierra Club. "We know we've achieved some goals, but we need to go further."

The report, the first of its kind by the National Estuary Program, ranked 28 of the country's estuaries, based on factors including water quality, pollution and the health of shellfish such as oysters, designating them as "poor," "fair" and "good." The results were almost evenly divided, with 29 percent considered "fair," 32 percent "good" and 37 percent "poor."

Problems facing both Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay included seagrass loss - 40 percent of Tampa Bay's seagrasses and half of its marshes disappeared since 1950. Nitrogen pollution in both bodies continues. However, the good news is that some efforts to reduce pollution and improve water quality continue.

Source & full story: <http://www.bradenton.com/280/story/66916.html>

FAA Commits \$72M For Panama City Airport Move (New York,NY,USA)

Jun 5, 2007, By Madhu Unnikrishnan, Aviation Week

FAA has pledged \$72 million in Airport Improvement Program funds for the relocation of Panama City-Bay County International Airport to a 4,000-acre parcel of land donated by Florida's St. Joe Co.

FAA committed the funds, to be disbursed over four years, after concluding that "both physical

and environmental restrictions at the existing site make it impractical and extremely costly to update [the airport] to meet FAA standards." The existing airport is hemmed in by residential and business development on three sides and North Bay on the other. The runway's 59-foot overrun ends in the bay. Updating the runway to comply with FAA overrun regulations would be cost-prohibitive on the land side, and it would be illegal to extend it into the water due to 15 acres of protected seagrass directly off the existing runway (Airports, Jan. 31, 2006).

With the FAA's \$72 million, the airport authority is within sight of funding the entire \$330 million airport relocation plan, said Kip Turner, executive assistant for the airport. Florida's Transportation Department has pledged \$119 million toward the project, he added.

Source & full story: http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_channel.jsp?channel=comm&id=news/PANA06057.xml&headline=F

Plans for Chalong Marina expansion unveiled (Phuket, Thailand)

June 5, 2007, Phuket Gazette

CHALONG: Three different plans for Phase II of the Chalong Marina Project, which aims to provide berths for more than 200 vessels to Chalong Bay, were announced at a public hearing about the project at Muang Phuket School today.

During the hearing, Kumpanart Chewapreecha of Golden Plan Company Ltd, one of three consulting firms hired by the Marine Department to study the impacts of the project, unveiled the three alternative designs for the marina. All three involve construction of two large breakwaters to protect boats in the marina from waves, but differ in the orientation and location of the berths around a large Customs Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facility built out on the main dock. Under the first two options, existing coral and seagrass beds would be protected by the breakwaters. Under the third option, they would be removed.

Source & full story: <http://www.phuketgazette.net/news/index.asp?fromsearch=yes&Id=5742>

Restore Seagrass--Recover livelihoods (Thailand)

18 March 2007, Wetlands.org

15 fishing boats crews or 'Reung Pitd' with more than 30 people including seagrass experts and WWF marine biologists, together replanted 1500 seagrasses collected from a neighboring natural area of 1600 km². 'Mud at the replanting area is in good condition and suited to seagrass planting. In addition, natural seagrass which was covered by sediment in the past has begun to start resurfacing. It is a good trend for sea grass to blossom out in the future.' said a seagrass expert, Subpachai Dhammachod. On first appearances, 'Seagrass areas' may not be as beautiful or have as much economic value compared to the beauty of coral reef biodiversity attracting tourism or the same benefits gained from mangrove forests. But fishing communities at Bann Koh Nok, Klong Chareong and Fai ta feel in totally different ways since the Tsunami.

Supat Budnoi, one of local fishermen who has been living there more than 20 years said 'Before the disaster destroyed various things such as property and natural resource, communities relied on this seagrass area to make a living either as a main income or as a supplemental occupation. Collecting sea wing shells which are popular for consumption, horse crab king crab in some seasons; Fishing for species including Sea Bass and Cod which are quite common locally were the way of life. Since the Tsunami disaster, the giant wave's enormous sediment covered a 10 km² seagrass area. Since then the, the source of living has disappeared. Although 2 years has already passed, the previous seagrass has not recovered. The communities now have to fish in the further open sea which costs in time, money and more risk to personal safety'more: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Desal demands(Sydney,NSW,Australia)

June 4, 2007,By Siobhan Tanner, The Leader

Rockdale Council has demanded a raft of measures from Sydney Water to protect Botany Bay from the effects of the desalination pipeline from Kurnell to Kyeemagh.

In its submission to the Department of Planning, the council raised several concerns about the

potential damage to the environment including the disturbance of acid sulphate soils in Botany Bay and contaminated sediment in the Cooks River which could result in dead fish and plants.

The council wants Sydney Water to undertake any restoration works to Lady Robinsons Beach needed after the construction and operation of the desalination plant at Kurnell. Also listed as concerns were the release of potentially polluted water into the stormwater system; the degradation of seagrass and the spread of a noxious algae weed

Source & full story: http://www.theleader.com.au/2007/06/desal_demands.php

Bay Area now feeling effects of 50 years of warming trends (Oroville,CA,USA)

May 24, 2007, By Douglas Fischer, Mercury-Register

SAN FRANCISCO — Forget the future. Global warming's impacts — be they sea-level rise, weird weather or vast ecological die-offs — are well under way here and now. Warming trends during the past 50 years suggest the region will have to rethink how it goes about restoring tidal wetlands, such as the vast South Bay salt ponds. Some regions being lovingly restored now may never emerge from low tide 20 to 50 years' hence.

Sea level rise — half a foot so far since 1900 and as much as three feet in the next century — will transform how we go about restoring tidal wetlands, said Natalie Cosentino-Manning, a National Marine Fisheries Service restoration specialist. In most cases, she said, it will make restoration easier: Areas such as the South Bay salt ponds that have been diked and closed to the tides will be opened either by backhoe or by nature. Properties too expensive to acquire today will become cheaper as owners flee to higher ground. But efforts to save the few remnant patches of eel grass, a critical nursery for fish and crustaceans native to the Bay, are likely toast, she cautioned. "We're going to have to accept these changes. We won't be able to restore these habitats in the manner we had intended," she said. "That 1 percent of the San Francisco Bay that's eel grass may not make it." (Caltrans, partly to mitigate eel grass damaged by construction of the new Bay Bridge span, has already spent \$1 million surveying eel grass beds throughout the Bay and \$8 million to buy 3,300 acres of North Bay marsh and clear it of old Navy buildings.)

Source & full story: http://www.orovillemr.com/news/bayarea/ci_5975434

Villagers back Yamu marina plan (Phuket,Thailand)

Phuket Gazette

PHUKET CITY: In the latest in a back-and-forth dispute between opposing village groups, developers and the government, about 200 villagers from Baan Yamu in Pa Khlok staged a peaceful demonstration outside the Phuket Provincial Hall on May 29 to show their support for a controversial marina project at Cape Yamu.

The planned 60-million-baht project, to be constructed by The Yamu Company, would also include a 39-berth marina, a hotel covering 100-rai hotel, and other facilities. The marina would end the villagers reliance on subsistence fishing, move them into more modern vocations and provide better prospects for their children's futures, the letter said.

Responding to the concerns raised by local groups that the development would harm the environment, K. Bangsod said, "The seagrass and dugong are nearly all gone. The actual situation is different from the way environmental groups portray it in the media. Those people aren't local villagers, so they don't see what it is really like here. "The villagers here know very well that the seagrass and dugong have almost disappeared. They may be gone entirely."

Pa Khlok-based Phuket Province Local Fishermen Groups Coordination Network, an umbrella group representing six local fishing rights groups who oppose the project, maintain that the marina development could damage the seabed, coral, seagrass and in the waters off Cape Yamu. Phuket's highly-endangered dugong population depend on seagrass as its sole source of food.

Source & full story: <http://www.phuketgazette.net/news/index.asp?fromsearch=yes&Id=5729>

Low Okeechobee Bad For Boats But Not Fishing (Tampa,FL,USA)

May 30, 2007 By FRANK SARGEANT Tampa Tribune

Much of Lake Okeechobee looks more like a parched Kansas wheat field than Florida's top bass lake these days due to record low water. The lake level had hit 9 feet above sea level, and it's expected to go down another 6 inches this week barring unexpected rains. The drought has exposed hundreds of acres of bottom in the always shallow "Big O," and made thousands of acres that are usually navigable water into dangerous mine fields for boaters.

At normal water levels, the 25-mile-wide lake is surrounded by vast marshes, and these areas and the submerged grasses close to them are where most of the fish are located. But now, all the water has pulled far away from the grassy edges, forcing the fish into the remaining holes far from their traditional haunts.

Little Cockroach is extremely shallow and in general not a great fishing venue, but is often used as a shortcut by flats boats headed from the Little Manatee River to the popular fishing waters along the South Shore. It's also reportedly a favored poaching area for illegal gill netters in pursuit of mullet. The EPC says the travel is destroying seagrasses in parts of the bay.

Source & full story: <http://sports.tbo.com/sports/MGB2XOW3B2F.html>

S/Y Legacy still aground off Florida Keys, cofferdam failed (Fort Lauderdale,FL,USA)

May 31, 2007 By Capt. Tom Serio, The Triton

It appears that the latest effort from Peter Halmos to extract his S/Y Legacy from her resting spot in the Florida Keys for the past 19 months has failed. Legacy, the 158-foot Perini Navi that Hurricane Wilma blew atop some seagrass a few miles off Key West in October 2005, has remained there despite efforts and much red tape to get her free.

The latest attempt seemed hopeful: build a cofferdam around the yacht and float her out, a few hundred feet at a time, to the deep-water channel just beyond her perch. Though she draws 11 feet, she's sitting in less than 2 feet of water. According to a recent story in the Palm Beach Post, the two-month, \$20,000-a-day effort failed. Dragging the vessel out has raised concerns about the impact that would cause to the environment (the yacht sits in a National Marine Sanctuary), but pulling her is likely to cause less damage than the cranes and barges used in traditional salvages. "The recovery effort will involve removing the vessel via the inbound track to minimize injury to undisturbed seagrass," said Cheva Heck, communications director for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. "Any additional injury to the area during the removal will be evaluated for restoration. The area where Legacy is sitting will be graded and replanted with seagrass at the owner's expense."

Source & full story: <http://www.the-triton.com/megayachtnews/index.php?news=1637>

The oceans and us (Suva,Fiji)

June 03, 2007, By Akisi Bolabola of WWF Fiji, Fiji Times

"Whether you live along the coast or far inland, each one of us is connected to the world's ocean. Get inspired, get involved and celebrate is the message to all on World Oceans day." Oceans cover more than 70 per cent of the earth's surface and no doubt when one looks at the world map, blue is more dominating in comparison to the green (land area). This dominating feature sure calls for recognition as nations and communities embark to celebrate World Oceans Day on June 8.

World Oceans Day has been celebrated since 1992 and on this day communities and organisations take the opportunity to engage in activities that promote this unique and vast environment. The oceans play a vital role that at times goes unnoticed in local communities.

Pacific island communities have cultural and traditional connections to the sea. These traditional and cultural identities are usually displayed in myths, songs, legends, art, dances, customs and our very own diet.

To mark world oceans day, some programs have been organised for June 8 by WWF Fiji Country Program, USP's Institute of Marine Resources, Laje Rotuma Initiative, Department of Fisheries and Department of Environment. Students from Udu collect data from seagrass monitoring every term and send to WWF. They have their own equipments to carry out the monitoring and have been trained by WWF and are assisted by the teachers and community trainer.....more: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

GALLERY

Ecofiesta, Townsville (Qld) : 02 June 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

The Townsville Ecofiesta gave us the opportunity to promote and recruit new members. There were plenty of activities. Our "Seagrass meadow" was also popular with the community. Text: Posa Skelton.

Yule Point (Qld): 31st May, 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Suva, Fiji, June 16th 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Location: Corpus Christi Teachers College, Laucala Bay, Nasese, Suva

Sponsor: Seagrass-Watch HQ

Contact: Register with Seagrass-Watch HQ by: June 05 2007

Airlie Beach, Queensland, July 14th 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Location: QPWS Offices, Airlie Beach

Sponsor: Whitsunday QPWS Volunteers & Seagrass-Watch HQ

Contact: Seagrass-Watch HQ hq@seagrasswatch.org

Broome, Western Australia, September 1st - 2nd 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Location: TBA

Participants: Environs Kimberley & Kimberley Land Council

Sponsor: Environs Kimberley, Kimberley Land Council & Seagrass-Watch HQ

Contact: Danielle Bain (08 9192 7741 or 0414 841 519 or email dans_al@westnet.com.au)

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 (volume 2 only)

- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (hardcopy)

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

Seagrass-Watch Newsletter Issue 29 <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.