

Seagrass-Watch HQ

From: Seagrass-Watch HQ [hq@seagrasswatch.org]
Sent: Saturday, 24 February 2007 8:46 PM
To: Seagrass-Watch HQ
Subject: SEAGRASS-WATCH BULLETIN - 24 February 2007



SEAGRASS-WATCH BULLETIN

24 February 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.

www.seagrasswatch.org

NEWS

Great Sandy Strait Fauna & Flora Watch wins local environment award (Queensland, Australia)

February 23, 2007

Community Group, Great Sandy Strait Fauna & Flora Watch, has won the The Burnett Mary NRM Coastal Community Award for 2007. The Award is for excellence in activities that have contributed to the significant improvement of local coastal and/or marine environments, including estuaries, dune systems, wetlands and saltmarsh ecosystems.

Spokesperson for the group, Mr Gordon Cottle said that the group was thrilled to win the award, and that special thanks must go to group members, Robyn Bailey, Paul Bailey, Hanne Larsen and Pat Cottle. "A wonderful achievement for such a small group." GSSFFW is an active participant of the Seagrass-Watch program, monitoring 18 sites throughout the Great Sandy Strait.

Seagrass-Watch HQ would like to congratulate Gordon, Pat, Robyn, Paul and Hanne on their wonderful achievement, and tireless effort in monitoring the Great Sandy Strait. A job well done and an award well deserved!!! [more http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Action to save Reef (Queensland, Australia)

February 23, 2007, The Courier Mail

Pesticide run-off may be polluting larger areas of the Great Barrier Reef than originally thought. A series of satellite images obtained by CSIRO scientists have confirmed for the first time that sediment plumes travel to the outer reef and beyond.

It was originally believed the plumes - which can contain pesticides, herbicides and other micro

pollutants from river systems- affected only the inner Great Barrier Reef lagoon and the inner reef corals. But the new images, taken by NASA's MODIS satellite by GeoScience Australia's Alice Springs site between February 9 and 13, show they are travelling up to 135km offshore.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is overseeing the implementation of the 10-year, \$40 million Reef Water Quality Protection Plan to improve land management practices in the catchment area. It's a plan that Dr Dekker believes should be supported by farmers, tourism authorities and the government. He said revegetating areas around waterways would help catch the sediments before they reached the ocean..... [more](#)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Delegation supports port land takeover (Bradenton, FL, USA)

February 22, 2007, Lyndsey Lewis - Bradenton Herald

TALLAHASSEE - Manatee County lawmakers Wednesday agreed to support a bill that would transfer control of an area of submerged land off Port Manatee from the state, potentially opening the door to increasing commercial activity at the port. The bill, filed by state Rep. Ron Reagan, R-Bradenton, would shift control of about 400 underwater acres to the Manatee County Port Authority. If the measure eventually passes and is signed by Gov. Charlie Crist, the port authority would have more leeway to dredge the port's basin. "If we get more ships coming in, there'll be more money coming in," Reagan said.

The bill could also help the port authority beef up security around the area and protect several acres of seagrass near the port. Although port officials have already started work on some of these measures, greater local control "basically cuts down on the time they need to do these things in the future," Reagan said.

The port authority is made up of members of the Manatee County Commission, but David McDonald, executive director of Port Manatee, said members' roles with those organizations do not intertwine. Since the port authority and county commission are "two separate entities," McDonald said, Manatee County doesn't have to worry about shouldering additional costs if the bill passes. McDonald also emphasized that, even with plans to dredge the area's basin, several precautions have been taken to protect the environment as officials clear a path for large ships. "I think it's going to be a very win-win situation," he said.

Glenn Compton, who oversees the environmental watch group ManaSota-88, isn't entirely convinced. "I'd have doubts about the port's ability to manage any environmentally sensitive land above and beyond what they're trying to do," he said. Even with efforts to protect seagrass, Compton said, dredging the basin could have negative effects on marine life in the area.

Source & full story: <http://www.bradenton.com/mld/bradenton/news/local/16753474.htm>

Australian Government Envirofund (Canberra, Australia)

February 2007

The Australian Government Envirofund is the local action component of the Australian Government's \$3 billion Natural Heritage Trust. It helps communities undertake local projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable resource use.

Community groups and individuals can apply for grants of up to \$50,000 (GST inclusive) to carry out on-ground and other actions to target local problems. Applications for Round 9 close at 5pm on Friday 27 April 2007. Your signed original application must be received at the Envirofund office in Canberra on or before that date. [more](#)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Koh Yao villagers stage pier protest (Phuket, Thailand)

February 20, 2007 - Phuket Gazette

PHANG NGA: About 30 protectors have been camping out for over a month on Klong Son Beach on Koh Yao Yai, demanding the government scrap plans for a pier to be built there by a large land developer.

The protesters comprise poor Muslim residents of Village 3 and representatives from non-governmental organizations supporting their cause. The villagers see the project, which includes dredging of 100,000 tons of seabed sediment to build an offshore breakwater, as a threat to the marine environment that they rely on to make a living. The villagers began their protest after the project had been approved by all relevant government agencies during a July 20 meeting chaired by Phang Nga Governor Winai Buapradit.

Earlier this month, National Human Rights Commissioner Vasan Panich told the Gazette that the site is part of "tsunami protection" zone, one of many coastal areas protected from development in order to leave intact natural barriers to any future tsunamis. K. Vasan said that the proposed construction would "certainly" affect offshore seagrass beds that sustain the area's highly-endangered dugong population.. [more](#)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

First aerial survey to map dugong numbers (Bangkok, Thailand)

February 14, 2007, Bangkok Post

The first aerial survey of marine life along the Gulf of Thailand coast will begin next week. The 10-day operation will focus on the dugong population and the condition of the seagrass bed, the animal's only food, Marine and Coastal Resources Department chief Nisakorn Kositrat said.

The project, jointly implemented with the Foundation for Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft, will last from Feb 19 until 28. The foundation will provide two aircraft along with senior pilots. The department will send marine experts to collect information. The operation will cover 350 kilometres of coastal area in Chon Buri, Rayong, Chanthaburi and Trat provinces, said Mrs Nisakorn. Information obtained from the survey would be used in the drafting of a national plan for marine species conservation.

In the first stage, the operation will focus on dugongs and the seagrass bed. If successful, the project will be expanded to other animal species and marine resources, including sea turtles, mangrove coverage and coastal erosion, said Samran Gesorn, the project's chief pilot.

There are few dugongs left in Thai waters, including the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. A recent departmental survey found the number had increased from 126 in 2005 to 128 last year, a much-needed boost to efforts to preserve the rare creature and the seagrass bed. There are 500 square kilometres of seagrass bed in the Andaman Sea, and only 25 sq km in the Gulf of Thailand..... [more](#) <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

SunWest stalls at costly canal (St. Petersburg, FL, USA)

February 20, 2007By CHUIN-WEI YAP St. Petersburg Times

A multimillion-dollar canal to the Gulf of Mexico looks set to be the first major hurdle for developers behind SunWest Harbortowne, a 2,300-acre proposal to develop a limestone mine on Hudson's coastline.

For the developer, Sun West Acquisition Corp. needs as much as \$6-million to dredge the 21/2-mile, 10-foot-deep channel, said top Sun West executives R. Victor Taglia and Robert Carpenter. The company is searching for money but is running out of luck at state and federal levels, executives said Monday. "The channel drives this project," Carpenter said. "The county has pentup demand for public access to deep water." But for environmentalists, the canal represents a battleground over the seagrass that lines Hudson's coastal marshes and supports its rich ecosystem.

Sun West's developers downplayed the expected environmental damage Monday, saying they

had found a path through the marsh that is largely free of seagrass and is lined instead with sand and limestone. "The Sun West mine is going to be a battle for Middle Earth," said Clay Colson, an environmental activist, jokingly referring to the epic war in J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings.

The county has a stake in the canal because of its new 312-acre park, across from Sun West's proposed inland marina, that touts public access to the gulf. Pasco got the park and \$3-million in exchange for giving up its court dispute with Sun West over the mine's ownership. Sun West's proposal calls for 2,900 homes, a golf course, a 250-room hotel and convention center, and 33 acres of stores, scattered around five brilliant-blue lakes carved out by limestone mining. But it is the 32-acre marina and boat lift and its 100-foot-wide canal that have become the focus.

The dredging project could take as long as six months and needs permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and the state Department of Environmental Protection. Sun West is scheduled to make its formal development applications in May. "The inland marina would be dredged through some of the finest seagrass in the state," Colson said. "It's the most devastating thing they could do."

Source & full story: http://www.sptimes.com/2007/02/20/Pasco/SunWest_stalls_at_cos.shtml

Seven years of science keeps Reef great (Townsville, Australia)

February 12, 2007

After seven years of studying the Great Barrier Reef, the Cooperative Research Centre for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (CRC Reef) has closed its doors, leaving a legacy of better understanding of reef systems and their key threats, as well as a collection of expert advice which has significantly influenced policy and management of coral reefs throughout the world.

The centre, which operated from 1999 until 2006, provided a basis for partnerships between reef managers, tourism and fishing industries and research providers. "It has been a privilege to be part of this venture which has created a network of research providers, research users, educational institutions and communities working towards common goals," said Sir Sydney Schubert, Chairman of CRC Reef.

CRC Reef undertook collaborative research that informed on the major issues facing reef managers and industry including: biodiversity conservation, emerging tourism and recreation pressures, global warming, and the effects of overfishing and water quality on reef systems. "Results from CRC Reef's research were transmitted in ways that users could understand and really use, said Sir Schubert. Our Scientists went beyond the data to provide expert opinion and form consensus views on major issues." In 2003, CRC Reef expanded its scope into the Torres Strait to work in partnership with Torres Strait islanders to address sustainable use of marine resources in the region.

More information about the achievements of CRC Reef can be found in a booklet entitled 'World Heritage Research: Making a Difference'..... [more](#)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Barnegat Bay has breathing trouble, expert says (Atlantic City, NJ, USA)

February 11, 2007 By DONNA WEAVER (Press of Atlantic City)

Increasing nitrogen levels are destroying certain marine species and ecosystems in the Barnegat Bay, according to a research professor at the Rutgers University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences in New Brunswick.

"When a bay is overenriched, it causes a change in species and specific ecosystems. These changes include losing important seagrass at the bottom of the bay and that leads to a loss of shellfish," Michael Kennish said.

Kennish said 75 percent of New Jersey's seagrass is located in Barnegat Bay and Little Egg Harbor. In 2006, a group of Rutgers researchers concluded the amount of seagrass was extremely low in Barnegat Bay — in fact, the lowest the team had ever seen. The amount of seagrass in Barnegat Bay dropped by 50 percent, and the amount in Little Egg Harbor decreased by 88 percent, they found.

Seagrass is the critical habitat of organisms like the blue crab and scallops. According to Kennish, if this habitat is wiped out, so are the organisms that live there.

Source: <http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/story/7195453p-7050204c.html>.

Lee creeks owe 'disgusting' algae to development (Fort Myers, FL, USA)

February 19, 2007, By Kevin Lollar, The News-Press

Ulva — its name is kind of melli-fluous; its living sheets of thin, translucent, bright green cellulose are kind of pretty, and you can eat it (very high in iron and protein). Also known as sea lettuce, Ulva is a genus of macroalgae, and it's fouling two Lee County creeks and parts of the county's Charlotte Harbor shoreline.

"It's disgusting," said Aaron Adams, head of Mote Marine Laboratory's Charlotte Harbor Field Station. "I come up here fishing sometimes, and it grosses me out." This is one algal bloom that can't be blamed on releases from Lake Okeechobee. Nutrients in the water triggered huge algal blooms in the river and Caloosahatchee estuary. Many people blame continuing algal blooms solely on Okeechobee releases, but the Ulva-choked Yucca Pen and Culvert creeks are almost 20 miles north of the mouth of the Caloosahatchee and far from any Lake Okeechobee influence.

In some ways, the Ulva problem at Yucca Pen and Culvert creeks is a microcosm of Southwest Florida's algal blooms. Ulva in the creeks covers the shallow creek bottom, thus reducing habitat for juvenile snook and other fish. In the flats outside the creeks, huge patches of Ulva smother seagrass beds — seagrasses are important for many fish and other marine life, and when algae blanket seagrasses, the natural estuarine community disappears. Ulva covers large areas of oyster bars. As filter feeders, oysters are important to the estuary because they remove pollutants from the water. The decomposition of dead algae sucks oxygen from the water and can create a dead zone.

Standing knee-deep in Ulva at Yucca Pen Creek recently, Adams expressed frustration at the continued unplanned development that turns creeks into nutrient shotguns and at the lack of government effort to reduce nutrient loading. "It has happened elsewhere, so it's not like people can say they didn't know it was going to happen here," Adams said. "A few years ago I said it wasn't a matter of 'if' but 'when and to what severity.' I just didn't think it would happen this soon. "The light bulb should be going on somewhere. What are people waiting for?"

Source & Full story: <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070219/NEWS0105/70219005/1075>

Investigation into sinking barge begins (Queensland, Australia)

February 12, 2007 news.com

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) has started investigating why a barge started sinking during a cyclone off the coast of far north Queensland last week. MV Wunma was carrying 5000 tonnes of zinc concentrate when it was swamped by heavy seas whipped up by cyclone Nelson in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Ten crew members had to be winched to safety, and there were fears the ship would sink before a salvage team could secure it. The 113-metre barge was stabilised on Saturday and

arrived in Weipa this morning, where investigations and repairs will be carried out.

Mining company Zinifex, which owns the Wunma, had been warned in an academic report in 2002 there was a high risk it would spill its load or sink in a cyclone. However, Zinifex is now confident the barge's cargo will remain secure. The damage to the barge had caused community concern that any spillage of the toxic cargo could result in an environmental disaster. The gulf is home to a wide variety of fish, plant and animal species and has one of the largest dugong seagrass beds in the region..... [more](#)
<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Thursday Island (Qld): 26th of March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Location: PKA Hall Thursday Island
Time: 8:30am – 4:30pm
Participants: Land & Sea Centre Rangers (Hammond & Horn Islands)
Sponsor: Land & Sea Management Unit (TSRA)
Contact: Jane Mellors (ph 07 47222655 fax 07 47782970 mob 0417076309 Email jane.mellors@dpi.qld.gov.au) or Miya Isherwood (ph 4069 2957)

Townsville (Qld): 18th of March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Location: Arcadia Bay SLSC at the Rockpool on the Strand
Time: 8:30am – 4:30pm
Participants: Townsville-Thuringowa Seagrass-Watch
Sponsor: Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM
Contact: Adam King (Project Officer-Coastal Education Ph 07 4721 4077)

GALLERY

Shelly Beach (Townsville, Qld): 19 February 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Magnetic Island (Townsville, Qld): 18 February 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

"Summer monitoring by our U3A Earth and Sea Class was carried out on the 18 Feb 2007. The tide was late and very marginal while being the only real option for this month. Nevertheless, everything went well." Text: Don Kinsey

Bushland Beach (Townsville, Qld): 18 February 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

"There were 14 of us who ventured out, to Bushland Beach, however, the 800mm odd of rainfall that we have received over the past three weeks made the water quite muddy. There were also strong winds out to sea, which increased the tide by 10cm." Text: Lux Foot

Great Sandy Strait (Qld): 02-04 February 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

"A most productive, enjoyable and interesting weekend. Four sites were monitored: Boonoroo (BN1) done by Gordon, Hanne and Pat on the 02 Feb, Poona (PN1& PN2) done by Robyn and Hanne on the 3rd Feb and Tinnanbar (TN1) done by Gordon, Robyn and Pat, on the 4th Feb. "

Motupore Island (PNG): 26 & 31 January 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

FROM HQ

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

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Manual for Assessing Fish Stocks on Pacific Corral Reefs (only 5 left)
- 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 is supported by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of Environment & Heritage) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (EPA), the David & Lucile Packard Foundation and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries.

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