



SEAGRASS-WATCH E-BULLETIN

31 October 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

IN THIS BULLETIN

NEWS	2
Coastal Habitats Are The Biosphere's Most Imperiled Ecosystems.....	2
TeamSeagrass in the news!.....	2
"Horrific sealife injuries unnecessary says expert	3
Negril restoration project a concern for Jamaica Environment Trust (Kingston, Jamaica).....	3
Independent tests show high levels of toxic gas (Western Australia, Australia).....	3
More funds for Eprapah project (Redland Bay, Queensland, Australia).....	3
Mangrove conservation paying off—DENR (Philippines).....	4
Manatee found slaughtered in Southern Belize (Belize City, Belize)	4
Florida's growth obscures efforts to improve water quality (Sarasota, FL, USA)	4
Seagrass monitoring (Fort Myers, FL, USA)	5
Report calls into question sea grass die-off estimate in Clam Bay (Naples, FL, USA)	5
Approval for desal but work is begun (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia)	5
Manatees Could Leave Florida's Endangered List (USA).....	5
Seagrass restoration in Florida Bay restores boat grounding sites (FL, United States).....	6
Environmentalist says Lemon Bay degrading (Charlotte, FL, USA).....	6
Letter from the Queen (Spain).....	6
GALLERY	6
Whitsunday region: 22 October - 27 October 2007	6
Hamilton Island 22 - 24 October 2007	6
Pioneer Bay (Airlie Beach) 25 - 26 October 2007	6
Hydeaway Bay 27 October 2007	6
Rodds Bay, Gladstone (Qld) : 26 October 2007.....	7
Cyrene Reef (Singapore) : 26 October 2007	7
Townsville - Mackay: 05 October - 09 October 2007	7
Bushland Beach (Townsville) 05 October 2007	7
Shelly Beach (Townsville) 06 October 2007	7
Magnetic Island (Townsville) 07- 08 October 2007.....	7
Sarina Inlet (Mackay)09 October 2007	7
Cockle Bay, Magnetic Is (Qld) : 07 October 2007	7
Weipa , Napramum (Qld) : 05 October 2007	7
Nth Qld: 24 September - 27 September 2007	7
Dunk Island (Mission Beach) 24 September 2007	7
Lugger Bay (Mission Beach) 25 September 2007	7
Green Island (Cairns) 26 September 2007	7
Yule Point (Cairns) 27 September 2007	7
Yeppon - Gladstone: 24 September - 28 September 2007	7
Great Keppel Island (Yeppon) 24 and 25 September 2007	7
Rodds Bay (Gladstone) 27 September 2007	7
Gladstone Harbour 28 September 2007	7
TRAINING WORKSHOPS.....	7
Mornington Island, Gulf of Carpentaria, October 30-31 2007	7
Moreton Bay, Brisbane, November 24-25th 2007	7
PUBLICATIONS	7
Ecology of Papua publication out	7
FROM HQ.....	8
Seagrass-Watch Shop http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html	8
Virtual Herbarium	8
Giveaways.....	8
Future sampling dates.....	8
Seagrass-Watch News Issue 30	8
Handy Seagrass Links	8

Please note: links to sources were active on date of publication. Some sources remove links periodically.

NEWS

Coastal Habitats Are The Biosphere's Most Imperiled Ecosystems

ScienceDaily (Oct. 21, 2007) — The BBVA

Foundation's Third Debate on Conservation Biology allowed leading international experts to present findings of their latest research into the scale, causes and consequences of global loss of coastal habitats. The disappearance of these ecosystems, which include coral reefs, mangrove forests, wetlands and seagrass meadows, has serious consequences like loss of biodiversity, depletion of exploitable living resources, impaired capacity of the oceans to sequester CO₂ and loss of the leisure value of the coastal zone.

Carlos Duarte, researcher at the Spanish Council for Scientific Research and coordinator of the debate, informed the public that "coastal habitats are disappearing at a rate of between 1.2% and 9% a year and are now the biosphere's most imperiled systems, with rates of loss 4 to 10 ten times faster than those of the tropical rainforest." The causes of these losses are many and include "the rapidly growing population of coastal zones, currently home to 60% of the planet's inhabitants, along with the urban development, infrastructure works and ecosystem destruction this growth entails." Also, increased discharges of nitrogen, phosphorus and organic matter have caused the deterioration of waters and sediments in many of the world's coastal zones.

Núria Marbà, a researcher at the Mediterranean Institute for Advanced Studies (Imedeia) talked about the results of the Praderas project, funded by the BBVA Foundation, which show that most Mediterranean meadows of *Posidonia oceanica* – extremely valuable ecosystems for the functions and services they provide – have experienced severe shrinkage in the last 40 years. "We have observed a rise in mortality among some marine angiosperm species in the aftermath of heat waves, suggesting that meadow decline will accelerate as the seawaters continue to warm." Studies carried out as part of this project, she explained, show that the seagrass meadows along the Spanish coast are losing about 5% of their extension each year, and even more in years like 2003 when the sea temperature rises higher than normal.

Bill Dennison, of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (USA), clarified that "seagrass meadows are vital habitats which grow along the coasts at tropical and temperate latitudes and supply ecological services that make them among the most valuable ecosystems in the biosphere". It is estimated that 54% of meadows have lost part of their coverage. Dennison contends that seagrass meadows reflect changes in ecosystem quality and act as global biological barometers for man-made pollution; the meadows are like "coal mine canaries" for the health of coastal ecosystems and their decline is an unequivocal sign of coastal environmental stress.

According to Dennison, "reports on changes in seagrass meadow extension have documented losses since 1980 of an area equivalent to two football fields with each hour that passes. Most worrying of all is that these calculations are very much on the conservative side, since only 9% of seagrass meadows have been studied. So the total area lost probably equates to 10 football fields per hour."

One of the factors favoring this loss is that seagrass meadows are not in the public eye, despite their ecological importance: "In the case of coral reefs, around 130 news items appear in the mass media for every scientific article published, compared to just 13 items appearing for every scientific article on seagrass meadows. It is vital that we bridge this gap between science and social awareness" added Dennison, before concluding his intervention with a call for "a global conservation effort to halt the loss of seagrass meadows."

The debate was organized jointly by the BBVA Foundation and the Cap Salines Coastal Research Station (Imedeia-CSIC and University of the Balearic Islands).

Full story and source: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/10/071020090707.htm>

TeamSeagrass in the news!

myzone, Thursday October 25, 2007

"Like other youngsters, Kok Sheng often goes to the seaside. And he is there to be a volunteer. He is a volunteer for this green group called "Team Seagrass". The group is involved in monitoring seagrass and other marine creatures. For the last nine months, Kok Sheng had visited Chek Jawa@ Pulau Ubin, Pulau Semakau and Sentosa with Team Seagrass to do reccees and monitoring.

As a Team Seagrass volunteer, Kok Sheng said that they will monitor the health of the seagrass and identify the species of seagrass at the monitoring sites. The data collected at these sites will be analyzed to get a better understanding of the state of the seagrass.

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

"Horrific sealife injuries unnecessary says expert

Cairns Post, Saturday October 20, 2007

Horrific boat propeller wounds on turtles, dolphins and dugongs have prompted calls for boaties to slow down near reefs and seagrass. "The results are pretty horrific," Queensland Parks and Wildlife conservation services manager Mark Read said, following the recent Esplanade beaching of an adult female turtle suffering propeller wounds. "The turtle had been hit by a relatively small outboard powered boat and it had six major cuts to its shell," Dr Read said.

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

Negril restoration project a concern for Jamaica Environment Trust (Kingston, Jamaica)

October 29, 2007, Jamaica Gleaner

The Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET), Diana McCaulay, is worried about the planned restoration programme of the Negril Beach in Westmoreland because a number of key environmental issues have not been addressed.

The Kingston-based coastal engineering firm Smith Warner, which conducted a one-year study on the beach strip, indicated that it could take up to US\$54 million to restore the seven-mile beach, which has been undergoing dramatic rates of erosion.

But McCaulay said the resort town is overdeveloped and that there are other long-standing environmental issues impacting the beach, which must be addressed for the restoration to be successful. McCaulay said Negril has surpassed its carrying capacity and there are problems of poor water quality, the removal of seagrass beds and poor run-off.

Full story and source: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20071029/news/news3.html>

Independent tests show high levels of toxic gas (Western Australia, Australia)

31 October 2007, Busselton Dunsborough Mail

Independent air testing at Port Geographe has shown high levels of toxic gas above worksafe limits. The Department of Health is currently looking into the matter.

Measurements of hydrogen-sulphide from the testing fluctuated from 17 parts per million down to readings of zero over a period of 20 minutes. According to Worksafe Australia it is allowable for workers to be exposed to concentrations of 10 parts per million of hydrogen sulphide, averaged over an eight hour workshift, with the exposure not exceeding 15 parts per million. Worksafe Australia reports hydrogen sulphide is very toxic by inhalation.

The PGAG claim the levels of hydrogen sulphide are caused by gas being emitted from the accumulated seagrass on the foreshore. The Shire of Busselton also conducted air sampling and testing a couple of months ago when there were higher volumes of seagrass on the beach. Shire of Busselton director of community infrastructure Mark Goodlet said the shire had taken 40 air samples, all of which had readings of zero apart from one which showed hydrogen sulphide levels of six parts per million. These results were sent to the Department of Health last Wednesday.

Full story and source: <http://busselton.yourguide.com.au/news/local/general/independent-tests-show-high-levels-of-toxic-gas/1078303.html>

More funds for Erapah project (Redland Bay, Queensland, Australia)

October 25, 2007, Redland Bayside Bulletin

PRACTICAL work to rehabilitate Erapah Creek will continue following another injection of funds to support the project. Redland Shire Council, SEQ Catchments and Scout Association of Australia (QLD Branch) have been working in partnership over the past 20 months to repair badly eroded tracks,

undertake weed control and replant along Eprapah Creek in the Scouts' Karingal property in a bid to prevent sediment running into the creek and decreasing water quality.

Eprapah Creek catchment, in the southern part of Redland Shire, is environmentally significant as it covers four conservation areas, provides a continuous wildlife corridor for more than 12 kilometres and influences the health of seagrass habitats offshore from Victoria Point. SEQ Catchments has now provided another \$15,000 to support the project until June 2008.

So far more than 600 metres of eroded tracks have been rehabilitated with several hundred metres of creek bank treated for lantana infestations with revegetation activities ongoing. Cleverly constructed diversion bunds were installed on the tracks after the ground was ripped to allow the planting and natural regeneration of native shrubs to bind the soil and provide long term erosion protection. The tracks have now stabilised, resulting in a much reduced flow of sediment. There are visible improvements in water quality in the adjacent creek

Full story and source: <http://redland.yourguide.com.au/news/local/general/more-funds-for-eprapah-project/1075601.html>

Mangrove conservation paying off—DENR (Philippines)

October 21, 2007, Inquirer.net

MANILA, Philippines--There's new evidence that the country's mangrove cover has slowly grown to nearly 60 percent of its original state in the 1900s. Satellite pictures from the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) indicated that the cover has reached 289,890 hectares, according to the Coastal and Marine Management Office (CMMO).

The country's mangrove cover was a robust 500,000 ha in the 1900s, but this dwindled to 112,000 ha in 1998 from over-exploitation, conversion of areas to other uses and logging of watersheds, according to studies. Most mangroves were cut for their timber, or were converted into shrimp ponds or fish farms. Their disappearance became noticeable in the 1970s. This resulted in the deterioration of seagrass and coral reef ecosystems, studies said.

Full story and source: http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view_article.php?article_id=95851

Manatee found slaughtered in Southern Belize (Belize City, Belize)

October 19, The Reporter Belize

Manatees or sea cows - they are the aquatic darlings of the conservation world and it just so happens that Belize has been traditionally known as the last remaining paradise for the West Indian species. But a series of manatee deaths, both natural and man-made over recent years, have caused these gentle herbivores to become more endangered than ever.

It's been a while since we've had the displeasure of reporting the discovery of dead manatees on Belize's coastline; nevertheless, these 400-800lb. creatures have not have a good day for some time with an increase in deaths from propellers of fast moving vessels that clip them while grazing on the seagrass beds in near shore estuaries or when sleeping near the surface.

The latest discovery however was a tad different when representatives from the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and the Protected Area Conservation Trust (PACT) spotted the scant remains of a female carcass sometime last week while on a site visit to "Garobo Point" – an area south of Deep river.

Full story and source: <http://www.reporter.bz/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=2316&Itemid=2>

Florida's growth obscures efforts to improve water quality (Sarasota, FL, USA)

October 18, 2007, By Kate Spinner, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

A program meant to reduce pollution in the state's bays and rivers enters its 20th year with a mixed legacy in Southwest Florida, its moderate successes largely overshadowed by rampant growth and continued loss of wetlands.

State lawmakers started the Surface Water Improvement Management Program in 1987 to restore wetlands, fill drainage ditches and keep a close watch on seagrasses and pollutants in important bodies of water, including Charlotte Harbor, Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay.

The program has bolstered the waterways' health, but it has not been the panacea conservationists originally envisioned, said Lisa Beever, head of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

Full story and source: <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20071018/NEWS/71018004>

Seagrass monitoring (Fort Myers, FL, USA)

The News-Press

Florida has about seven species and 502,000 acres of seagrasses, which are an important habitat and nursery for many types of marine life, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The state Department of Environmental Protection monitors seagrass species, blade lengths, abundance, number of shoots, distance from a fixed point on land and depth. It also tests for type and density of epiphytes growing on the seagrass and the sediment type.

The Punta Gorda office of the DEP tests about 50 sites each fall throughout Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor, Pine Island Sound, Matlacha Pass, Cape Haze, Gasparilla Sound and San Carlos Bay.

Full story and source: [http://www.news-](http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=A4&Dato=20071017&Kategori=NEWS0101&Lopenr=1017002&Ref=PH)

[press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=A4&Dato=20071017&Kategori=NEWS0101&Lopenr=1017002&Ref=PH](http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=A4&Dato=20071017&Kategori=NEWS0101&Lopenr=1017002&Ref=PH)

Report calls into question sea grass die-off estimate in Clam Bay (Naples, FL, USA)

Wednesday, October 17, 2007, Naples Daily News

Collier County released a report today by seagrass expert Dave Tomasko that calls into question previous estimates of a seagrass die-off in Outer Clam Bay. County commissioners agreed to spend \$40,000 on the report after some Naples neighborhoods raised concerns about declining water quality in the bay, which borders a mangrove forest that has been the object of a 10-year restoration project paid for by Pelican Bay developer WCI, Collier County and the Pelican Bay Services Division.

The study says an estimate, based on the county's 1992 seagrass protection plan, that seagrasses once covered 60 acres of Outer Clam Bay is likely wrong, as is a 1994 seagrass study by the county that estimated 10 acres are left. As for water quality, the study found a 68 percent increase in runoff since the 1940s, bringing more pollution with it. The study estimates a 108 percent increase in nitrogen and a 416 percent increase in phosphorus, both components of fertilizers that pollute coastal waters.

The report recommends new seagrass and water quality monitoring programs, controlled access of powerboats to shallow portions of Clam Bay and a public education campaign about how to reduce runoff pollution.

Full story and source: http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/oct/17/report_calls_question_sea_grass_die_estimate_clam_bay/?breaking_news

Full story and source: http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/oct/17/report_doubts_sea_grass_die_clam_bay/?breaking_news

Approval for desal but work is begun (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia)

October 18, 2007, Daily Telegraph

THE last piece of the desalination plant jigsaw is expected to fall into place this month, with Planning Minister Frank Sartor due to approve a massive pipeline route that will be bigger than the M2 motorway tunnel.

The latest desalination project update from Sydney Water says pipe laydown areas along the route are now being finalised, but Nature Conservation Council of NSW spokesman Sam McGuinness said there were a number of outstanding issues concerning the proposed pipeline route that were yet to be finalised. He said the pipeline would almost certainly cause damage to Botany Bay, with the disruption of seagrass and the dredging of toxic soils, and questioned why the plant and pipeline had not been approved simultaneously.

A Sydney Water spokesman yesterday indicated they expected approval by the end of the month and that efforts were being made to ensure seagrass was not disturbed.

Full story and source: <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,22603107-5001021,00.html>

Manatees Could Leave Florida's Endangered List (USA)

October 9, 2007. By Greg Allen, NPR

What's 10 feet long as an adult, weighs more than 1,000 pounds, lives in rivers and bays and is Florida's state marine mammal? If you answered manatee, then chances are you also know it's an endangered species. That status could soon change, though. Wildlife officials in Florida want to "downlist" the manatee, moving its status from "endangered" to "threatened."

Supporters of the move say it's a sign of the Florida manatee's comeback. Environmental groups say it has more to do with the influence of developers.

Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission meets again in December. Staff members believe that by then, they can satisfy the questions and finalize their long-delayed plans to move the Florida manatee off the state's list of endangered species.

Full story and source: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14869099>

Seagrass restoration in Florida Bay restores boat grounding sites (FL, United States)

Monday, October 08, 2007 Bradenton Herald

Seagrass restoration has begun in Florida Bay to restore boat grounding sites. The first phase of the restoration project on Cross Bank is expected to take about two weeks to complete. The damaged areas will be filled with finely crushed limestone in biodegradable sandbags. After a few weeks, workers will return to plant the seagrass. Full regrowth can take three years.

"Seagrass is habitat for a whole lot of things, including young fish, lobsters and invertebrates that feed fish," said Everglades Chief Natural Resources Manager Dan Craig. The project is expected to cost about \$100,000 and will be paid for by those responsible for the boat groundings there.

Full story and source: <http://www.bradenton.com/331/story/166053.html>

Environmentalist says Lemon Bay degrading (Charlotte,FL,USA)

September 26, 2007, By STEVEN J. SMITH Charlotte Sun-Herald

SOUTH VENICE -- The water quality in Lemon Bay is "degrading," according to Lisa Beever, director of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program. Beever headed a presentation for the Sarasota County Commission Tuesday at the Robert L. Anderson building where she outlined the good, the bad and what she believed could be a hopeful outlook for area water quality -- provided steps are taken to improve things.

"We're concerned about the seagrasses," Beever said. "They're stable for now, which is good news. But as water quality degrades, we expect seagrass beds to start shrinking." Beever added "prop scarring" -- the destruction of sea grass by boat propellers -- was a terrible threat, because these grasses take so long to grow back.

Beever believed much could be accomplished through education. She recommended a good Web site for children, developed through a joint effort with WGPU Public Media to teach them about area habitats: www.wgcu.org/curiouskids. Beever added a Florida-friendly landscaping DVD was also in the works with WGPU, called "Florida Friendly Neighbor To Neighbor."

Full story and source: <http://www.sun-herald.com/Newsstory.cfm?pubdate=092607&story=tp7ew3.htm&folder=NewsArchive2>

Letter from the Queen (Spain)

September 2007, Costa del Sol News

Doña Sofía, the Queen of Spain, sent a letter in support of a pressure group attempting to save the eelgrass in the seabed off Caleta de Vélez, endangered by work being carried out on the port. The text of the letter went as follows:

"WE cannot see it, but there is a rare bed of *Zostera marina* (eelgrass) just off the port in Caleta de Vélez, in the Axarquía, which sustains a large variety of fish and shellfish species, and it is in danger of being destroyed by planned amplification work in the port. An environment association made up of many local ecologists in the Axarquía, called the Platform for the Defence of the Seabed, is attempting to save it, regarding this area under the sea as essential to the ecological well-being of the area and belonging to all of us."

Full story and source: <http://www.surinenglish.com/noticias.php?Noticia=11462>

GALLERY

Whitsunday region: 22 October - 27 October 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Hamilton Island 22 - 24 October 2007

Pioneer Bay (Airlie Beach) 25 - 26 October 2007

Hydeaway Bay 27 October 2007

Rodds Bay, Gladstone (Qld) : 26 October 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Cyrene Reef (Singapore) : 26 October 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

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Bushland Beach (Townsville) 05 October 2007

Shelly Beach (Townsville) 06 October 2007

Magnetic Island (Townsville) 07- 08 October 2007

Sarina Inlet (Mackay) 09 October 2007

Cockle Bay, Magnetic Is (Qld) : 07 October 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Weipa , Napramum (Qld) : 05 October 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Nth Qld: 24 September - 27 September 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_page9_07.html

Dunk Island (Mission Beach) 24 September 2007

Lugger Bay (Mission Beach) 25 September 2007

Green Island (Cairns) 26 September 2007

Yule Point (Cairns) 27 September 2007

Yeppon - Gladstone: 24 September - 28 September 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_page9_07.html

Great Keppel Island (Yeppon) 24 and 25 September 2007

Rodds Bay (Gladstone) 27 September 2007

Gladstone Harbour 28 September 2007

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Mornington Island, Gulf of Carpentaria, October 30-31 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Participants: Indigenous Land & Sea Rangers from Wellesley Islands region

Sponsor: Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation & NAILSMA

Contact: Seagrass-Watch HQ or Kelly Gardner Email: kgardner@clcac.com.au

Moreton Bay, Brisbane, November 24-25th 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Participants: Moreton Bay Seagrass-Watch

Sponsor: SEQ Catchments, QPWS(EPA), QCC and DPI&F

Contact: Seagrass-Watch HQ

or Keira Price Email: Keira.Price@epa.qld.gov.au

Registration : <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

PUBLICATIONS

Ecology of Papua publication out

A new 2-volume book entitled "Ecology of Papua" covers the ecology of the Papua province of Indonesia formerly referred to as "Irian Jia" on the western half of the New Guinea island. Ecology of Papua is a definitive guide to the ecology and natural history of Papua. From the Ecology of Indonesia series, this 2 volume set contains essays by the worlds leading experts on Papua's physical environment, flora, fauna, natural ecosystems, human interactions with nature and the conservation of natural resources. Several chapters are included which deal with seagrasses, coral reefs and associated ecosystems, namely: "Seagrass Ecosystems of Papua" by McKenzie, Coles, and Erftemeijer "Fishes of Papua" by Gerald R. Allen "Marine Invertebrates of Papua" by Fred E. Wells "The Ecology of Papuan Coral Reefs" by Douglas Fenner "Mangrove Forests of Papua" by Daniel M. Alongi

For more information, see <https://peripluspublishinggroup.com/berkeley/shopping/search2.php?name=papua&search=name&pag=0&button=GO>

FROM HQ

Seagrass-Watch Shop <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html>

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 30 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 29 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (hardcopy)

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 30 <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.