



SEAGRASS-WATCH E-BULLETIN

04 March 2008

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Abbreviated articles are presented with links to their source. Seagrass-Watch HQ recommends that readers exercise their own skill and care with respect to their use of the information in this bulletin and that readers carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance of the material in the bulletin for their purposes. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

IN THIS BULLETIN

NEWS	1
Corner Inlet Seagrass exposed for Monitoring team (Victoria, Australia).....	1
Scientists find nets in Torres air survey (Torres Strait, Australia).....	1
Marine life workshops (Torres Strait, Australia).....	2
Seagrass mapping project planned ahead of port expansion (Townsville, Australia)	2
Dugongs flee banks (Moreton Bay, Australia).....	2
Tagging turtles for a wedding (Suva, Fiji)	2
Marooned yacht finally freed in Keys (Melbourne, FL, USA).....	3
Dredging Permit Receives Federal OK (Tampa, FL, USA)	3
China pledges full efforts to curb worsening offshore pollution (Xinhua, China)	3
MP worries about boardwalk's impact on environment (Queensland, Australia)	3
Adelaide's seagrass dying (Australia)	4
FROM HQ.....	4
Frequently Asked Questions	4
Seagrass-Watch News Issue 31	4
Seagrass-Watch Shop	4
Virtual Herbarium	4
Giveaways.....	4
Future sampling dates.....	4
Handy Seagrass Links	4

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

NEWS

Corner Inlet Seagrass exposed for Monitoring team (Victoria, Australia)

4 March 2008, Parks Victoria Media Release

Last weekend's low tides looked like someone had pulled the plug on Corner Inlet. The Corner Inlet Community Seagrass Monitoring Team made use of this draining tide on Saturday to complete summer seagrass surveys at Tin Mine Cove and Bennison Bank. The seagrass survey is part of the ongoing Corner Inlet Community Seagrass Monitoring Project being run by The People and Parks Foundation and Parks Victoria and was organised by Jonathon Stevenson, Marine Ranger with Parks Victoria.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Scientists find nets in Torres air survey (Torres Strait, Australia)

02 March 2008, page 88, The Sunday Mail.

A team of Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries research scientists found more than 300 nets during a recent survey in the Torres Strait. The abandoned tangled fishing nets, most of them from foreign fishing vessels, ranged from net fragments to large whole nets. These nets catch any marine life in their way as they are carried along by currents and the tides. "Ghost nets are a major shipping and environmental hazard," marine biologist Helen Taylor said.

"We will advise the Torres Strait Regional Authority where we find the nets and they will pass this on to the local community rangers to assist in their efforts to remove them." The team also surveyed and mapped habitats near shipping lanes, including the Great North East Shipping Channel.

The information gathered would be incorporated into the Australian Marine Safety Authority's Oil Spill Response Atlas, Ms Taylor said. "This area contains some of the most sensitive marine habitats in Australia, including a range of coral, seagrass, mangroves and algae," she said.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Marine life workshops (Torres Strait, Australia)

February 27 - March 4, 2008, Page 16, Torres News

Researcher Alana Grech is conducting a series of workshops with nine Island communities to assist with managing dugong and turtle.

James Cook University's Helene Marsh says it could take six months to determine if there had been any impact on the seagrass beds in the Torres Strait from the recent heavy rain.

"Seagrass in the Torres Strait has diebacks from time to time, but the jury is out on whether it's caused by PNG floods or sediment resuspension from long dries, when a lot of dirty water is washed out. "Dugongs have to eat seagrass with its growth depending on getting enough light and that can be affected by the big floods such as those along the east coast of Cape York."

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Seagrass mapping project planned ahead of port expansion (Townsville, Australia)

26 February 2008, Townsville Bulletin

Scientists are preparing to map one of Queensland's deepest seagrass beds in the lead-up to the Abbot Point Port expansion. Abbot Point, near Bowen, is home to a vast underwater meadow of seagrass, which live offshore at depths of more than 5m. Ports Corporation Queensland (PCQ) has announced an expansion of the point, which would increase its coal export capability from 21 million tonnes to 50 million tonnes. It is hoped the State Development Area will become a multi-cargo facility servicing a range of heavy mining-related industries.

In the meantime, PCQ is preparing an environmental assessment of the area using state-of-the-art technology. Starting next week, the latest in underwater video camera technology will be towed behind a Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries research vessel. Scientists will also undertake dive surveys to map the seagrass.

PCQ general manager of environment Mr Brunner said the unique seagrass beds were believed to have been in a healthy state since they were last surveyed three years ago. "Seagrass survives there because the water clarity is quite good, so it actually gets some light in those deep waters," he said. "Seagrasses in other parts of Queensland, which are shallower, tend to be more desiccated after a couple of years of dry weather. "They get a bit burnt from too much sun. "Basically, as far as we know, the seagrass is healthy but the purpose of the study is to find out its health and where exactly the seagrass meadows are, and what's in them – the types of seagrass there."

PCQ CEO Brad Fish said the corporation was committed to the environmentally responsible management of its ports with minimum impact on the natural and social environment.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Dugongs flee banks (Moreton Bay, Australia)

21 February 2008, Bayside Bulletin

A sudden increase in dugong numbers in the South Moreton Bay region has raised concerns over the health of their traditional dugong feeding grounds. Spokesman for the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside Branch Simon Baltais said the recent *Lyngbya* toxic algae bloom (cyanobacteria) may have caused significant damage to the seagrass meadows on the Moreton and Amity banks and this might explain the sudden appearance of large numbers of dugongs in the waters of Southern Moreton Bay. "The sudden appearance of dugongs in the waters of Southern Moreton Bay is a major concern, but also highlights some positives," he said.

"Photographs by local residents and research by WPSQBB shows the Southern Moreton Bay region still supports significant seagrass meadows and dugongs maybe using these until the seagrass meadows on the Moreton Banks have recovered. "The use of the seagrass meadows in the Southern Moreton Bay region shows how important they are to the long term survival of the Moreton Bay dugong population.

"We should be ensuring we take great care of these seagrass meadows if we are to continue to enjoy the magnificent sight of dugongs, something that is quite special as there is no other place on the planet where one can see a dugong herd so close to a major urban centre."

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Tagging turtles for a wedding (Suva, Fiji)

03 March 2008, Fiji Times

On the dusky evening of Thursday December 27, to the whooshing sounds of many pairs of legs wading through knee high waters, two tagged 75kg green turtles were released into the incoming tide of the mangrove lined bay of Ligaulevu Village on Mali. The tag and release of turtles was a wedding day wish for Leone Vokai of Ligaulevu Village on Mali and Sally Bailey of Saint Brides Major of Wales. This was a show of the continuing passion the couple have to the protection of biodiversity, and turtles in particular.

Collecting information on the sightings of turtles will tell us how far turtles travel around Fiji and even in and around the Pacific. We know from satellite tagging and titanium flipper tagging, that turtles from Samoa, the Cook Islands and even Hawaii travel to Fiji to feed in extensive seagrass fields within inshore waters. The seagrass beds in the fishing areas along the Macuata coast in particular is a popular feeding ground for green and hawksbill turtles.

Full story and source: <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=82879>

Marooned yacht finally freed in Keys (Melbourne, FL, USA)

27 February 2008, Florida Today

KEY WEST — A luxury yacht tossed into shallow tidal flats by Hurricane Wilma has finally been freed from the seagrass. The 158-foot Legacy is now anchored in the Key West Harbor

The seagrass wasn't the only thing weighing it down. Owner Peter Halmos argued with the government for more than two years over how to free the yacht without doing too much damage to the Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge, where it was stuck.

A Miami salvage company slowly pulled the vessel free over the past six months, sometimes only moving ten feet per day. Halmos has either lived aboard the Legacy or on a houseboat nearby to ward off pirates and thieves. He says he's going to have the vessel restored. Federal officials plan to investigate the damage it left behind.

Full story and source: <http://www.floridatoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080227/BREAKINGNEWS/80227004/1086>

Dredging Permit Receives Federal OK (Tampa, FL, USA)

28 February 2008, Tampa Tribune

PORT RICHEY - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has approved one of the three permit applications for the city's multimillion-dollar dredging project, an agency official said. Michael Nowicki, a corps project manager in Tampa, said the federal regulatory agency on Wednesday signed off on dredging for 20 of the 26 canals requested under the permit. He said the canals approved by the corps are those where seagrass is nonexistent.

The permit is one of a trio being reviewed by regulators for a proposal to dredge miles of silt-clogged canals and other waterways degraded by pollution and years of neglect. Before Port Richey moves ahead with the project, it will also need approval from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which is still reviewing all three applications.

Full story and source: <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/feb/28/pa-dredging-permit-receives-federal-ok/>

China pledges full efforts to curb worsening offshore pollution (Xinhua, China)

25 February 2008, Chinaview.

CHANGSHA - China will go all out to check ever worsening damage to offshore ecology caused mainly by the discharge of land-borne pollutants this year, according to a top Chinese marine official. The pledge was made by Sun Zhihui, director of the State Oceanic administration (SOA), while addressing an ongoing annual conference held in Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province.

Industry experts blame people's poor awareness of the harm done to marine ecology by pollutants discharged by coastal cities. Many cities discharge raw sewage into offshore waters without treatment, said Sun. Sun promised that his organization would tighten monitor of the ecology of China's offshore waters and make experiments with restoring marine ecology through establishing seven special protective zones this year, including two marine nature reserves. SOA will be stricter with approving procedures to ban new projects that fall short of standards for aspects such as environmental assessment, protection and energy efficiency from getting started. In the past, the rules have been waived on some projects. SOA will vigorously carry out other ecological restoration projects by growing mangrove, developing seagrass patches and seaside wetlands at coastal sections ranging from Yellow River estuary-Laizhou Bay, Xiamen bay, Minjiang estuary, to the areas off the eastern coast of Hainan Island.

Full story and source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-02/25/content_7665837.htm

MP worries about boardwalk's impact on environment (Queensland, Australia)

25 February 2008, Sunshine Coast Daily

This is one of the most special plots of land left in central Noosa. It is a place buzzing with marine life, where seabirds come to nest, and is also one of the last remaining mangrove habitats close to the heart of town. And it could soon be completely destroyed, according to Noosa MP Glen Elmes. The developer behind the \$400 million Settler's Cove development wants to build a new boardwalk and pathway through the middle of the sensitive area.

The boardwalk itself would be 800 metres long, three metres wide, and would also take in a 200-metre concrete pathway. "The strip of land we're talking about is the last piece of dominant vegetation on that particular side of the river. Mr Elmes said the second option of building the boardwalk out over the river itself would also present problems.

"There's all the seagrass through there and it would come out straight over the top of the seagrass," he said. "The seagrass is used to living in sun not shade. "So you're either going to destroy the seagrass or destroy the animal life by building through the vegetation." But former Noosa mayor Noel Playford, from the Noosa Parks Association, said he could not see a problem with the boardwalk, as long as it was built in an "environmentally sensitive" way.

Full story and source: <http://www.thedaily.com.au/news/2008/feb/25/mp-worries-about-boardwalks-impact-environment/>

Adelaide's seagrass dying (Australia)

22 February 2008, ABC Regional Online

A study of Adelaide's coastal waters has found that large tracts of seagrass have died because of poor water quality and high nutrient levels. The study's director, Professor David Fox, says more than 5,000 hectares of sea grass have been lost between Port Gawler and Sellicks Beach since the mid 1940s.

Professor Fox says waste and storm water from rivers and streams have contributed to the loss. "Nitrogen is the single key element responsible for implicating the loss of the seagrass," he said.

South Australian Greens MP Mark Parnell says the findings of the coastal waters study are not surprising. Mr Parnell says they should prompt the SA Government to recycle more waste water. "This study needs to drive Adelaide's water policy into the future. What it tells us is what we've known for some time and that is that our storm water and our waste water is ruining our coast, ruining our sea grass beds and destroying our beaches," he said.

The State Government has given in-principle support to the recommendations of the study. SA Environment and Conservation Minister Gail Gago says a committee will be formed to consider the recommendations and draft an action plan. "[There will be] \$400,000 towards the committee and the work the committee will need to do to bring all the stakeholders together to devise a very specific and detailed action plan," she said.

Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/02/22/2170250.htm>

Related links: <http://news.brisbanetimes.com.au/study-helps-solve-seagrass-mystery/20080226-1uyj.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/200802/s2172782.htm>

FROM HQ

Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/faq.html>

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 31 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

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

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

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

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