



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

**30 May 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.

## Happy Birthday Seagrass-Watch!

March 2008 marked Seagrass-Watch's 10th year. On behalf of Seagrass-Watch HQ we would like to say thank you for your support.

## IN THIS BULLETIN

|   |   |
|---|---|
| NEWS .....  | 1 |
| MPA monitoring workshop held (Palau) .....  | 1 |
| Ao Phuket hearing changed to Thursday (Phuket, Thailand) .....  | 2 |
| Unravelling splendour of sex in the seagrass (Brisbane, Australia) .....                                  | 2 |
| Nitrogen Loss In Seagrass Fields Is Retained By Animals And Microorganisms In Ecosystem (Indonesia) ..... | 2 |
| Cooper's Island Nature Preserve gets thumbs up from BEST (Hamilton, Bermuda) .....                        | 3 |
| Rockport aquarium's goals are to educate, keep admission free (Corpus Christi, TX, USA) .....             | 3 |
| Port Geographe situation is unacceptable: Farina (Western Australia, Australia) .....                     | 3 |
| Pier construction goes green (Panama City, FL, USA) .....   | 3 |
| Hol Chan boundaries to get expanded (San Pedro, Belize) .....   | 4 |
| Tangier Island mostly underwater by 2100 (Richmond, VA, USA) .....  | 4 |
| Foreshore issue public meeting (Esperance, Western Australia, Australia) .....                            | 4 |
| Florida lawmaker accused of end run around saving seagrass (St. Petersburg, FL, USA) .....                | 5 |
| Collier seeks state grant for Bayview Park improvements (Naples, FL, USA) .....                           | 5 |
| GALLERY .....   | 5 |
| Hervey Bay (Qld, Australia): 17 - 21 May 2008 .....   | 5 |
| Midge Point (Whitsunday): 17 May 2008 .....   | 6 |
| NEW PUBLICATIONS .....  | 6 |
| Workshop proceedings .....  | 6 |
| FROM HQ .....   | 6 |
| Frequently Asked Questions .....  | 6 |
| Seagrass-Watch News Issue 32 .....  | 6 |
| Seagrass-Watch Shop .....   | 6 |
| Virtual Herbarium .....   | 6 |
| Giveaways .....   | 6 |
| Future sampling dates .....   | 6 |
| Handy Seagrass Links .....  | 6 |

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

## NEWS

### **MPA monitoring workshop held (Palau)**

28 May 2008. Marianas Variety

A community-based Marine Protected Area (MPA) monitoring capacity building workshop was held recently. The Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) hosted the event where at least 12 participants attended the five-day workshop. The workshop focused on the capacity assessment and the need for monitoring.

Since Palau has some of the most diverse coral reef system in the world, there are threats, PICRC said. Since Palau's bread and butter is its environment, Palau is trying to conserve marine resources which are the source of pride for Palauans and source of income for the country. PICRC said that Palau has been practicing conservation know as "bul" or traditional way of prohibition from collecting certain species at certain location or by season.

The workshop also discussed field survey methodology such as seagrass taxonomy, fish taxonomy and setting up of seagrass monitoring site, in Ngelukes and deploy sediment traps.

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

### ***Ao Phuket hearing changed to Thursday (Phuket, Thailand)***

27 May 2008, Phuket Gazette

PHUKET CITY: The Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) and Phuket Province will hold a public hearing on Thursday, May 29 to gauge local response to the plan to move forward with the Ao Phuket megaproject, a 100-million-baht marina and convention center on 3,000 rai of reclaimed land in Phuket Bay.

The meeting has been moved up one day from its previously scheduled date of May 30. The general public is welcome. At the meeting DASTA representatives will explain and discuss the details of the project, including its advantages and disadvantages.

"In the past Phuket Bay had seagrass beds. I am not sure how good they were, but much better than they are now. Silt and clay from sea tin mining caused the sea bottom to harden and many species of seagrasses in the area died out as a result," biologist Kanjana Adulyanukosol of the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) said.

K. Kanjana last surveyed the area about 10 years ago with seagrass expert and PMBC colleague Sombat Poovachiranon, who said at the time that these few remaining seagrass beds might not survive with an increase in sedimentation in Phuket Bay.

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

### ***Unravelling splendour of sex in the seagrass (Brisbane, Australia)***

23 May 2008, by Jeremy Pierce Courier Mail

IT'S sex ed for dugongs. Researchers from the University of Queensland and Sea World have joined forces to develop strategies to accurately assess the reproductive status of wild dugongs in Moreton Bay.

Leader of the UQ dugong research team, Dr Janet Lanyon, said determining reproductive status of individuals is one of the most important factors for population modelling and effective management of a vulnerable species.

Field biologists will sample a selection of dugongs, which are representative of both sexes and from adult, sub-adult and juvenile size classes during the week-long study program. Trevor Long, Sea World's director of marine sciences, said the sampling involves lifting wild dugongs out of the water to take a comprehensive series of biological samples, measuring reproductive hormones plus an abdominal ultrasound to confirm reproductive state.

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

### ***Nitrogen Loss In Seagrass Fields Is Retained By Animals And Microorganisms In Ecosystem (Indonesia)***

22 May 2008, ScienceDaily

The nitrogen cycle plays a major role in seagrass fields. Dutch researcher Arie Vonk studied the nitrogen dynamics of seagrasses in Indonesia. He discovered that the interaction between seagrasses, animals and microorganisms results in an efficient nitrogen cycle in tropical seagrass fields. Consequently the nitrogen lost from seagrasses is still retained.

Seagrass fields are coastal ecosystems with important functions for coastal stability and fish populations. The collection and grazing of seagrass leaves is the most important nitrogen flow in these fields. Nitrogen is an important nutrient for organisms and the production of seagrass leaves requires large quantities of nitrogen. However, the leaf has a short lifespan and as it dies off, little of the nitrogen is retained by the plant. Leaf loss therefore also means considerable nitrogen loss for the plant.

Animal species that live amongst the seagrass can influence the export and dynamics of seagrass leaves. The most important grazers of seagrass fields are sea urchins, shrimps and fish. Shrimps, for example, retain nutrients by collecting the leaf material. Their holes can therefore form an important source of nutrients that can once again become available for uptake by seagrasses.

The research results are interesting for managers and conservationists of tropical coastal areas. Seagrass fields are important ecosystems for the fishing industry and therefore for food supplies. In addition to this, seagrass fields ensure stabilisation of the coast, an important characteristic in view of rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

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

## **Cooper's Island Nature Preserve gets thumbs up from BEST (Hamilton, Bermuda)**

29 May 2008, by Amanda Dale, Royal Gazette

The Bermuda Environmental and Sustainability Taskforce has welcomed plans to turn Cooper's Island into a National Nature Preserve. The first phase of the four-stage project opens to the public on Wednesday, and over the next few years, 44 acres of beach, coastline and woodland will be restored into a "living museum".

The aim is to create an eco-tourism destination, with opportunities for guided walks, scuba diving, bird watching, kayaking and whale watching. The National Park project is expected to cost \$7 million, but once up and running, could generate revenue of \$400,000 a year.

Conservation projects will restore Bermuda's endemic plant and animal life, while Government also plans to create a marine reserve to protect neighbouring seagrass beds.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.royalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?articleId=7d859af3003000d&sectionId=60>

## **Rockport aquarium's goals are to educate, keep admission free (Corpus Christi, TX, USA)**

28 May 2008, by Michelle Christenson, Corpus Christi Caller Times

ROCKPORT — Excitement grows inside the former maintenance shop for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on Rockport Harbor. After being closed for about 20 years, the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor reopened last summer in the 44-year-old building and recently hosted its 10,000th visitor.

A more recent addition is a tank that includes several varieties of seagrass, which is protected by the state in the Redfish Bay area. "(The aquarium's) whole goal is to identify the wildlife associated with the coastal area ... game and fish," said Lewis. "This gives people who are not on the water and not that familiar a way to understand."

Whether you sit and watch the fish in one of the tanks or test your sense of touch in one of the discovery boxes, it's about education. And children benefit from the hands-on experience. "You can talk all you want," said Kathy Daniels, director of First Learning Tree Child Development Center in Rockport. "But when you let them get in there with their hands, that's where the curiosity comes in, then knowledge. Kids love to learn, you just have to give them the opportunity."

*Full story and source:* <http://www.caller.com/news/2008/may/28/exhibits-growing-rapidly/>

## **Port Geographe situation is unacceptable: Farina ( Western Australia, Australia)**

28 May 2008, Gareth Mohen, Busselton Dunsborough Mail

THE situation at Port Geographe is "unacceptable", according to Port Geographe Working Group chairperson Adele Farina. Ms Farina, who is also the State Government Member for the South West, said she had committed much of her time to addressing the problems at Port Geographe and seeking sustainable solutions because the current situation was unacceptable.

"As to the modification of the groynes, the Minister is well aware of the community's views that the groynes should be modified. "However, no coastal engineer has been able to advise the government or the developer with any certainty that any modification of the groynes will correct the problems, either in part or in whole."

Ms Farina also stated a review was being made of the four year management plan that was originally recommended by Dr Mike Paul, as a way of dealing with the seagrass problem. "At the request of the PGWG, Mike Paul is undertaking a midway review of the four year management plan," she said.

*Full story and source:* <http://busselton.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/port-geographe-situation-is-unacceptable-farina/778484.aspx>

## **Pier construction goes green (Panama City, FL, USA)**

27 May 2008, By Ryan Burr, The News Herald

Constructing a pier using the most environmentally sensitive materials and practices still can damage the surroundings, so Bridge It Systems LLC has found a way to further limit the destruction.

The Panama City Beach company designed a 494-foot pier for Hibiscus by the Bay Condominiums that Tim Brock, a consultant for the corporation, said will have low impact on St. Andrew Bay and its marine life. With the Panama City Commission's approval, Bridge It started assembling most of the condominium's pier Thursday at the Carl Gray Park boat launch, which will minimize trampling on the seagrass beds that it will be placed above as early as today.

The decking is made of grate-like polypropylene panels that reduce shade over seagrass by 75 per-cent compared to most piers. Allowing maximum sunlight to penetrate through the deck is vital to marine life that need seagrass to lay eggs, Brock said. Plus, the grasses naturally enhance oxygen in the water, he said.

*Full story and source:* [http://www.newsherald.com/news/brock\\_4056\\_article.html/pier\\_bay.html](http://www.newsherald.com/news/brock_4056_article.html/pier_bay.html)

## ***Hol Chan boundaries to get expanded (San Pedro, Belize)***

22 May 2008, San Pedro Sun

A large crowd of fishermen, tour guides, mooring masters and the general public made it out for a very important consultation that took place on Wednesday, May 14th at the Lions Den. Facilitated by the crew at the Hol Chan Marine office but spearheaded by the San Pedro Tour Guide Association, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the extension of Zones B and C of the Hol Chan Reserve.

The Hol Chan Marine Reserve was formed primarily as a community-based initiative due to concern over the high level of uncontrolled, often destructive fishing and diving activities in the area. The entire reserve currently covers approximately 6.3 square miles and is divided into four zones: Zone A - The Reef (1 sq. mi.); Zone B - The Seagrass Beds (2.3 sq. mi.); Zone C - The Mangroves (.98 sq. mi.) and Zone D - Shark Ray Alley (2 sq. mi.).

During the meeting, Zone B and C were the center of discussion since the proposal aims at extending Zone B from 2.3 square miles to 8.4 square miles. The total proposed expansion for both Zone B and C will be a combined 15.02 square miles. This in turn, would increase the reserve from 6.3 square miles to 21.3 square miles, a little over three times its current size.

According to Reserve Manager, Miguel Alamilla the sole purpose of the request was to sensitize the public and get feedback in regards to the proposal. "We (Hol Chan) held this meeting as a request from the San Pedro Tour Guide Association and fishermen who use the area. What we are doing is management intervention where, in the end, tourism and fishing will thrive. We are proposing to discontinue damaging fishing practices and these include the practices of using nets and spear fishing. For many years, fishermen have depended on these islands and neighbouring seagrass beds as their lobster fishing grounds. We want to secure the mangrove and seagrass allowing them to remain intact while protecting the coastal and marine habitats from commercial fishing will save and protect valuable species such as the queen conch and the spiny lobster," commented Miguel.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.sanpedrosun.net/08-212.html>

*Related links:* <http://www.sanpedrosun.net/08-211.html>

## ***Tangier Island mostly underwater by 2100 (Richmond, VA, USA)***

22 May 2008, by Lawrence Latane III, Richmond Times

The National Wildlife Federation released a report today saying global warming poses devastating threats to the Chesapeake Bay and could drown half the estuary's beaches and swamps by 2100. The report released by the group composed of hunters, fishermen and conservationists, endorses the United Nation's call to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent over the next 42 years.

But, even such a drastic response will not prevent some disruptions in the bay region, said Patty Glick, the federation's senior global warming specialist. "Sea level rise is already underway and likely to continue . . ." she said yesterday.

J. Emmett Duffy, a professor at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, who also worked on the study, said warmer water temperatures are already imperiling eel grass beds that offer key habitat to the bay's economically-important blue crab. A massive die-off of eel grass in 2005 has been blamed on a sudden spike in water temperatures that summer. Rising water temperatures will continue to stress eel grass beds and likely endanger other bay species that are at the southern edge of their range, such as winter flounder and soft-shelled clams, Duffy said.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.inrich.com/cva/ric/news.apx.-content-articles-RTD-2008-05-22-0235.html>

*Related links:* [http://www.dailypress.com/news/local/dp-local\\_risingseas\\_0523may23,0,717714.story](http://www.dailypress.com/news/local/dp-local_risingseas_0523may23,0,717714.story)

[http://www.hometownannapolis.com/cgi-bin/read/2008/05\\_25-10/CSC](http://www.hometownannapolis.com/cgi-bin/read/2008/05_25-10/CSC)

## ***Foreshore issue public meeting (Esperance, Western Australia, Australia)***

21 May 2008, by Liam Ducey, Esperance Express

THE LOCAL Environmental Action Forum has claimed the construction of a headland near the tanker jetty would have a disastrous effect on the natural environment, and has called a public meeting to discuss the issue.

The headland, set to be constructed as part of the Esperance Foreshore Rejuvenation project, is in line with the Esperance Shire Council's Foreshore Masterplan. However LEAF president Fred De May says the construction of the headland has the potential to ruin the Esperance foreshore.

Mr De May said the direct impacts of the headland would include alteration of the littoral drift changing the shoreline and coastal biological processes; the loss of 100 metres of jetty amenity; interference with the iconic attraction of seals and the burial of inshore seagrass meadows.

*Full story and source:* <http://esperance.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/foreshore-issue-public-meeting/774224.aspx>

[www.seagrasswatch.org](http://www.seagrasswatch.org)

## **Florida lawmaker accused of end run around saving seagrass (St. Petersburg, FL, USA)**

20 May 2008, By Craig Pittman, St. Petersburg Times

After more than 20 years, environmental groups recently convinced lawmakers to make tearing up seagrass in state aquatic preserves a crime. But now the Florida Wildlife Federation and two other environmental groups that originally pushed for the change are asking Gov. Charlie Crist to veto the bill. They fear that if Crist allows it to become law, it will cause more seagrass destruction than ever before.

What has them concerned is an amendment that Rep. Will Kendrick, R-Carrabelle, slipped into the bill at the very end of a four-hour committee meeting April 15. Kendrick offered a pair of what he said were minor amendments, which were quickly approved without objections, and the bill passed the committee 30-0.

The state Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission are nevertheless supporting the bill. Scientists at the state's marine science lab in St. Petersburg spent three years in the early 1990s surveying the condition of Florida's sea grass beds. They found that more than 63,000 acres had seen moderate to severe scarring from boat propellers. The counties with the worst scarring were Pinellas, Monroe, Lee, Miami-Dade and Charlotte. "Nearly all the shallow sea grass beds in Florida show damage caused by boat propellers," two of the scientists wrote in 1994.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/wetlands/article514589.ece>

*Related links:* <http://www.wctv.tv/home/headlines/19162624.html>

<http://www.theledger.com/article/20080521/NEWS/805210386/1374>

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/editorials/article518388.ece>

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/article525686.ece>

<http://www.pnj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080526/NEWS01/80526015>

<http://www.pnj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080528/OPINION/805280310>

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/may/30/na-veto-polluted-sea-grass-bill/>

## **Collier seeks state grant for Bayview Park improvements (Naples, FL, USA)**

13 May 2008, Daily News staff Bonitanews

Collier County is applying for a \$400,000 grant from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to help pay for improvements to Bayview Park in East Naples.

County commissioners voted this morning to apply for the grant to offset the costs of a third boat ramp lane at the popular boat launch and 140 feet of new dock loading space. The \$2.3 million project also will add 80 parking spaces, a new canoe/kayak launch, new landscaping and educational signs about manatee and sea grass protection, including site specific maps to help boaters avoid sea grass beds.

Bayview Park often overflows on weekends with boaters, forcing them to park along the street leading to the park, creating a safety hazard, the county grant application states. Collier County has more than 24,000 registered boaters and four public boat ramps, of which Bayview Park is the only boat launch within a 15-mile radius.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2008/may/13/collier-seeks-state-grant-bayview-park-improvement/>

## **GALLERY**

### **Hervey Bay (Qld, Australia): 17 - 21 May 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

#### **Workshop: 17 May 2008**

Participants from the Hervey Bay Dugong & Seagrass Monitoring Program, Great Sandy Strait Fauna & Flora Watch and the Fraser Coast Regional Council attended the Seagrass-Watch workshop in Hervey Bay from 17th - 18th May, held at the Urangan Community Centre (Hervey Bay Botanic Gardens). To download the Workshop feedback pdf (Click Here)

#### **Burrum Heads: 18-19 May 2008**

Although seagrass abundance was low at each site, there were extensive and dense *Zostera* meadows shoreward. These meadows had not been present since 1999-2000. The meadows were abundant with animals and dugong feeding trails.

#### **Booral, UG3: 20 May 2008**

This site is present within the Booral wetlands. Although these meadows were extensive in 1998, there has been relatively little recovery since they were lost during the floods of 1999. Currently only a narrow (20m wide) strip of *Halophila ovalis* with some *Zostera capricorni* exists.

## Togoom, TG1 & TG3 : 21 May 2008

Seagrass abundance remains low at the Togoom sites. The intertidal banks are exposed to a lot of wave action and consequently sand movement: evident by the level of rippling in the sand. A lot of drift algae was also present on the sites.

## Midge Point (Whitsunday): 17 May 2008 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

The seagrass meadows looked very healthy, though interesting to note that the *Halophila ovalis*, which is present in the area, seems to be on the decline.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Workshop proceedings

Mellors, JE and McKenzie, LJ (2008). Seagrass-Watch: Proceedings of a Workshop for Monitoring Seagrass Habitats in Bowen, 17th May 2008. (Seagrass-Watch HQ, Cairns).24pp. [1.1Mb]  
[http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/proceedings/Bowen\\_workshop\\_May08.pdf](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/proceedings/Bowen_workshop_May08.pdf)

## FROM HQ

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

**Seagrass-Watch News Issue 32** <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
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 31 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 30 (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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Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.