



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

30 November 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.

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NEWS

Qld Govt rejects calls to dump reef protection plan (Brisbane, Australia)

27 November 2008, ABC News

The Queensland Government says it will not abandon plans to regulate farm practices to protect the Great Barrier Reef from run-off. In Parliament last night, Opposition spokesman David Gibson proposed the State Government abandon regulation and instead support the Commonwealth's Reef Rescue program, which takes a cooperative approach. Mr Gibson told State Parliament regulation is a backwards step.

The Queensland Government used its numbers to reject the motion. Sustainability Minister Andrew McNamara told Parliament stakeholders are being consulted about the regulations.

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

Related article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/24/2427547.htm>

WSA announces new Management Committee

24 November 2008

The World Seagrass Association (WSA) held elections on 21 November 2008 to elect a new management committee. Members of the World Seagrass Association are part of an international community who share an interest in seagrasses, their biology, conservation and management.

Management Committee

President: Michelle Waycott

Vice President: Jud Kenworthy

Treasurer: Jane Mellors

Secretary: Len McKenzie

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

Green group fears marine park dredging (Queensland, Australia)

24 November 2008, ABC News online

Conservationists say they are concerned about possible dredging in the Great Sandy Marine Park between Fraser Island and the mainland.

The Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Council says the Sustainability Minister is considering changing the marine park boundaries to allow dredging at Dayman Spit, the Burrum River and Wanggoolba Creek at Fraser Island off south-east Queensland. Spokeswoman Emma Currie says allowing dredging in the area would set a bad precedent and would have devastating environmental consequences.

"It's going to significantly impact dugong habitat and inshore coral reef both because of the way that dredging the sand causes fine particle matter which will settle as a blanket on the seagrass and on the coral as well.

The Sustainability Minister has confirmed he is considering applications for sand dredging at three locations in the Great Sandy Marine Park. But Andrew McNamara says no decisions have been made yet.

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

In a clearer Sarasota Bay, clearer signs of life (Sarasota, FL, USA)

30 November 2008, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Stand chest-deep in the waters of Sarasota Bay and look down, and you should be able to see your knees. Twenty years ago, standing in that same spot, greenish water laden with algae would have obscured anything below the waist.

In the wide, central section of the bay, a foot and a half of water clarity was gained during the 1990s. After another decade of closing leaky sewer plants, building water retention projects and restoring coastal wetlands, the gain is probably even larger. And a soon-to-be-completed study will likely conclude that judged by seagrass and clarity, the bay is as clean as it was when Harry Truman was president. This means more than a bay that is prettier and more marketable to visitors.

With clearer water, sunlight reaches more of the bay's bottoms, where seagrass beds have grown by more than 1,200 acres. These beds are the spawning grounds for the bay's fish, and their growth has created 5,500 acres of continuous, interconnected seagrass, which surpasses what aerial photos show existed in 1950.

Full story and source:

http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20081130/ARTICLE/811300358/2055/NEWS?Title=In_a_clearer_Sarasota_Bay__clearer_signs_of_life

Works on submarine cable start (Valletta, Malta)

28 November 2008, Times of Malta

Works to lay a second submarine link between Malta and Sicily started in Sty Paul's Bay yesterday, a few days behind schedule brought about by strong gale force winds last week.

In cases where *Posidonia*, or seagrass, is present, screws will be driven into the seabed close to the cable, usually every 10 metres. The cables are then anchored to the screws and thus fastened to the seabed. The risk of possible shifting of the cable on the seabed is thus avoided. As the *Posidonia* grows, the cable will tend to become caught within the matter it generates, thereby producing a further locking-in effect and a certain degree of protection. This, Go said, does not cause any damage whatsoever to the *Posidonia*.

A total of 290 kilometres of cable will be lowered on the seabed, with maximum depths reaching 900 metres, between the two islands.

Full story and source: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20081128/local/works-on-submarine-cable-start>

200 invited to be marine managers (Torquay, England, UK)

28 November 2008, South Devon Herald Express

A new body is beginning work to help manage the sea and coastline of Tor Bay. Seatorbay, a coastal management partnership, was launched on Wednesday at Living Coasts, Torquay, when more than 200 individuals and organisations were invited to celebrate the launch and become part of the future marine management of the Bay.

Elaine Hayes, director of Living Coasts and the chairman of the new body, said: "We have many important and sometimes conflicting issues to balance. "Torbay has one of the country's largest fishing fleets and has three busy harbours. It also has nationally important seagrass beds and is home to both UK species of seahorse.

"We need to represent the interests of everyone including fishing, conservation, the harbour authority, tourism and leisure.

One of the first proposed projects will be to map the sea bed of Tor Bay and create a coordinated database of activity.

Full story and source: <http://www.thisissouthdevon.co.uk/news/200-invited-marine-managers/article-508969-detail/article.html>

Guimaras marine life still struggling (Philippines)

27 November 2008 Inquirer.net

ILOILO CITY, Philippines -- The oil sludge may not be visible anymore but scientists say the damage to marine resources of Guimaras Island has persisted two years after a massive oil spill ravaged the island.

The scientific studies showed abnormalities in the breeding and growth of mangroves, seagrass, marine animals and sea cucumbers, and attributed these mainly to the contamination of the marine environment by bunker fuel from the sunken M/T Solar I. The studies, presented Thursday during the opening of the two-day Second National Conference on Solar I Oil Spill, showed the marine resources still suffered from stress brought by the contamination despite showing signs of recovery. Around 100 scientists, government officials and agencies that responded to the disaster attended the conference held at the UPV campus recently.

More than 2.1 million liters of bunker fuel spilled from the M/T Solar 1, which was chartered by Petron Corp., after it sank in stormy seas southeast off Guimaras on August 11, 2006. Solar 1 was travelling from Bataan to Zamboanga. It was considered as the country's worst oil spill, with around 8,580 families or 42,000 persons affected in Guimaras and some parts of Iloilo.

Several studies, such as those conducted by Marie Frances Nievales and Dr. Rene Rollon, also found the decline in seagrass cover and the number of marine animals, including sea cucumbers and shells. The scientists recommended continued and long-term monitoring and research to track the reaction and adaptation of the marine resources to the contamination.

Full story and source: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/regions/view/20081127-174777/Guimaras-marine-life-still-struggling>

Related article: <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/136516/Guimaras-still-reeling-from-oil-spill>

Dredging of Blind Pass to commence next week (Sanibel, FL, USA)

26 November 2008, Captiva Current

According to the most recent update from Robert Neal of the Lee County Division of Natural Resources, the pre-construction phase for the reopening of Blind Pass has almost come to a close and dredging is anticipated to begin next week. Seagrass transplanting operations, during which over 2,000 square feet of seagrass was transplanted into Dinkins Bayou from the dredge area, wrapped up on Nov. 18.

Dredging in the interior area of Blind Pass for beach and nearshore placement is expected to begin sometime during the week of Dec. 1, in addition to the construction of a steel sheet-pile containment cell.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and Lee County are planning public meetings on Sanibel and in Fort Myers to discuss a no motor ("pole-and-troll") zone in Wulfert Flats, a project that has currently been set aside.

Full story and source: <http://www.captivacurrent.com/News/articles.asp?articleID=4361>

Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (The Valley, Anguilla)

25 November 2008, Anguilla LNT

With 70 percent of the Earth's surface covered by water, the underwater world is as vast as it is unexplored. Compared to the land-based world, we know very little about this aquatic environment. Existing within critical ecological relationships, coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests work together to perform essential

services that support human life. Even on small Anguilla – or perhaps more so because of being on Anguilla – we can't ignore the importance of coastal and marine ecosystems.

An intricate network of coral reefs and seagrass beds, along with the island's limited but important mangrove forests, help to maintain a delicate balance that keeps Anguilla's coastal waters and shoreline clean, stocked with fish, lined with white sand, and protected from excessive and destructive wave action.

In the 2008 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for Biodiversity Conservation in the Fisheries, Marine, and Coastal Sector of Anguilla, one of its key findings was the need to increase the level of awareness of the importance, value, and need to effectively protect marine and coastal habitats. The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources (DFMR) has also recognised the need for data and research to support and inform management decisions as well as educational materials. To that end, the DFMR has been compiling an underwater guide to Anguilla which should be ready for publication in 2009. As a comprehensive guide, it includes species that exist in all of Anguilla's coastal and marine habitats – ranging from the nearshore seagrass beds, to the colourful coral reefs, to the open ocean, to the surprisingly diverse underwater sandy sea bottom stretches.

Full story and source: <http://www.anguillalife.com/ecocorner/eco1108.php>

Background on Anguilla: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anguilla>

Ecologist: Hope remains for world's oceans, but swift response is needed (Providence, RI, USA)

20 November 2008, Providence Journal

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — Outspoken marine ecologist Jeremy Jackson says humans have caused widespread and difficult-to-imagine damage to the world's oceans and that the response needs to be of immense proportions. He says it boils down to two simple concepts: Become citizens instead of consumers, and elect real leaders, not facilitators of consumption.

"I felt good last Tuesday," Jackson said of the election of Barack Obama, who on Tuesday was televised pledging a federal cap-and-trade system to limit carbon dioxide emissions and to invest billions in alternative energy. The hundreds of people attending the Fall 2008 Honors Colloquium on Global Environmental Change at the University of Rhode Island responded with enthusiastic applause.

Jackson, a 66-year-old ecologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California, said he realized about 15 years ago that many of the seagrass beds and coral reefs he studied as a young man were largely gone. That includes the grass beds of Chesapeake Bay and Florida Bay, and the reefs of Jamaica. Much of Australia's Great Barrier Reef looks like a garbage dump, Jackson said. Fish populations are dramatically reduced and dead zones are growing in oceans around the world. "It's become obvious that [humans] are the cause," Jackson said. "How could we be so out of it? The oceans were out of sight and out of mind and nobody was paying attention. As a marine ecologist, it's embarrassing."

It is essential, Jackson said, for people to reduce nutrient runoff and carbon emission and stop overfishing during the next few decades. "The notion that we'll have sustainable wild fisheries like we had in the past and feed nine billion people is just stupid."

Full story and source: http://www.projo.com/education/content/URI_Honors_Colloquium_20_11-20-08_JTCBC2S_v20.3906687.html

Manatees on the move: boaters be on the lookout

20 November 2008, Tampa Bay's 10 - St. Petersburg, FL, USA

Apollo Beach, Florida - Visitors to the TECO Manatee Viewing Center on Wednesday bundled up to catch sight of snuffling snouts and flapping flippers. When temperatures begin to drop, the canal near Apollo Beach becomes a favorite hangout for manatees. They're attracted by the warm water outflow of the power plant there.

This is the time of year when manatees are on the move looking for warm spots. And state wildlife officer John Saltzgaber urges boaters to lookout for them. He offers these tips: wear polarized sunglasses, scan the water in front of your boat and avoid seagrass beds where manatees feed.

"This time of year, with them congregating in areas around power plants... you have to go slow," says Saltzgaber while driving his patrol boat. He also points out a sign in the water that informs boaters of a manatee slow zone.

Full story and source: <http://www.tampabay10.com/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=94427&catid=8>

New resort 'threatens Malaysia's top dive spot' (Doha, Qatar)

19 November 2008 Gulf Times

KUALA LUMPUR: An oceanarium resort planned near the world-famous Sipadan diving spot off Malaysian Borneo could spell disaster for the region's delicate coral reefs, environmentalists said yesterday. The plan for the huge resort, complete with an artificial reef and research facilities, has also come under attack from indigenous Bajau or "sea gypsies" who say it infringes on their native rights.

The oceanarium resort is slated to be built on a 33-hectare site on Mabul island, located just next to Sipadan, which is famous for its coral reefs, teeming sea life and crystal clear waters. Reports said plans for the resort, touted as "a

marine habitat wonder," include fake seagrass and other devices to attract fish, as well as the construction of swimming pools and more than 200 bungalows and villas.

Environmentalists have criticised the plan, which will require tonnes of construction materials to be brought in by barges, saying it could destroy the island's marine life and degrade the corals off nearby Sipadan.

The Star quoted officials as saying the state cabinet had approved the resort on condition that the project managers would conserve and repair the coral reefs. However, it said the developers would have to get approval for the project's environmental impact assessment before they can begin work. Concerns over environmental damage on Sipadan prompted the closure of five dive resorts on the island in 2005.

Full story and source: http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=255480&version=1&template_id=45&parent_id=25
Related article: http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ieo_UO3JUAzZ7v_5jMsi4XwSvview

UK's only underwater flowering plant off North Wales coast (Llandudno Junction, UK)

18 November 2008, Daily Post

THE only underwater flowering plant in the UK is bloom-ing in the sea off the North Wales coast. Seagrass (*Zostera marina*) is a rare and threatened habitat in Europe. Yet, it carpets the sandy seabeds of a few sheltered bays in the UK, mostly in the south west, providing a safe haven for wildlife including young fish, invertebrates and, in some places, seahorses.

Divers at Porth Dinllaen near Caernarfon found the seagrass during a survey for the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). But the surveys also found that boat moorings and anchors are having a harmful effect on some areas of this valuable seagrass habitat.

The CCW and the National Trust plan to trial less damaging mooring systems.

Full story and source: <http://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/2008/11/18/uk-s-only-underwater-flowering-plant-off-north-wales-coast-55578-22278864/>

Keeping it green: Scientists protect Blind Pass seagrass (Fort Myers, FL, USA)

18 November 2008, The News-Press

It takes GUTS to transplant 32,670 square feet of seagrass from Wulfert Channel to Dinkins Bayou.

GUTS would be the Giga Unit Transplant System, a barge-mounted tool that cuts a 20-square-foot section of seagrass, transfers it to a receiver site and replants it - the patented machine is owned and operated by Seagrass Recovery of Indian Rocks Beach.

By Dec. 1, dredging will begin to reopen Blind Pass, which has been closed since 2001. Because the dredging project will be through a 0.75-acre section of seagrass in Wulfert Channel, the state wants Lee County to mitigate the damage. Instead of simply tearing up the seagrass, the county decided to transplant it.

For the Blind Pass project, 75 percent of the transplanted grass is Halodule; the rest is Thalassia. "We have a higher success rate with Thalassia, but Halodule expands faster than Thalassia," said Beau Williams, director of Seagrass Recovery's project affairs. "Halodule is like that crazy kid who runs around all over the place. Thalassia is like the old man who just sits there. So, if you're looking for acreage, Halodule is the one that's going to go wild."

Full story and source: <http://www.news-press.com/article/20081118/NEWS0116/811180385/1075>

Penrhyn Estuary Rehabilitation to Create Seagrass Habitat (Sydney, Australia)

As part of the Port Botany Container Terminal Expansion project, Sydney Ports Corporation have committed to the rehabilitation, expansion and long term maintenance of Penrhyn Estuary, including the creation of 6.5ha of seagrass habitat. Sydney Ports is spending \$8 million to rehabilitate and expand the estuary in efforts to reverse the declining quality of the estuarine habitat for migratory shorebirds, seagrass and saltmarsh and to retain the habitat as a locally important migratory shorebird site following port expansion.

Mapping of seagrass beds off Foreshore Beach since 2003 has identified a rapid natural decline of seagrass habitat in the area. In 2003, 9.7ha of seagrass were mapped, in 2006 approximately 4.7ha of seagrass cover was recorded. The seagrass continued to decline in 2007 and the most recent mapping in May 2008 identified only patches of mixed seagrass of poor quality equalling about 352m² remaining.

The cause of this decline is not known but sediment deposition on the seagrass beds is evident. The creation of 6.5ha of seagrass habitat as part of the Port Botany Expansion will aim to address the decline of seagrass in this location.

Full story and source: <http://www.wetlandlink.com.au/content/penrhyn-estuary-rehabilitation-and-expansion>

CONFERENCES

Queensland Coastal Conference 2009: Waves of Change (Gold Coast 13-15 May, 2009)

Registration for the Queensland Coastal Conference 2009 "Waves of Change" has now opened. The Early Bird discounted rate will be available until Wednesday 28 January 2009, please register and make payment before this date to secure the special rate.

The Queensland Coastal Conference 2009 is not just about learning of new developments in natural resource management, but will be a balanced discussion of practical, on-ground coastal management and the policies and programs that inform coastal zone management in Queensland.

To Register: <http://www.iceaustralia.com/qldcoast09/register.html>

GALLERY

Great Sandy Strait, Qld (Australia): October - November 2008 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Seagrass-Watch sampling continued on the Great Sandy Strait for the months of Oct and Nov. On Oct 15th, Boonooroo, site 1 was sampled. In November 2 sites at Tinnanbar were completed, TN2 and TN3 on the 12th November. Tinnanbar site 1 had to be abandoned on the 11th November due to heavy squalls, gale force winds (63 kph recorded at Double Island Point) and water over the site. Text: Gordon Cottle Great Sandy Strait Fauna & Flora Watch

Torres Strait, Far North Qld (Australia) : 23 - 27 October 2008 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 34 <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>

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.