



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

**31 October 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

### **Farm group urges reef run-off regulation rethink (Queensland, Australia)**

27 October 2008, ABC Far North Online

The Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) says most of the agriculture industry is already working towards best practice to help protect the Great Barrier Reef. The Queensland Government yesterday announced \$50 million to protect the reef from agricultural run-off. It follows Premier Anna Bligh's announcement on Friday that regulations will be introduced to improve water quality.

QFF spokesman John Cherry says Ms Bligh needs to rethink the announcement. "It's enormously costly for the Government," he said. "How are they going to regulate in a land management context? Ms Bligh says the Government will continue to work with farmers on the issue.

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

## **Govt to spend extra \$50m on Great Barrier Reef (Queensland, Australia)**

26 October 2008, ABC Far North Online

The Queensland Government says it will spend an extra \$50 million to protect the Great Barrier Reef. On Friday the Government announced it will introduce new regulations to prevent water pollution caused by farm run-off. Premier Anna Bligh says the funding will help farmers adopt better practices.

"Firstly provide direct consultancy work with farmers to identify areas where they need to change," Ms Bligh said. "Some of the funds will go to assisting farmers to implement change practices, some of the funds will be going to monitoring water quality so we can tell whether the new practices are working and whether we need to do more work."

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

## **Indigenous rangers, marine scientists team up to map seabed (Northern Territory, Australia)**

25 October 2008, ABC Online

For the first time, traditional Indigenous knowledge has been combined with the latest technology to map underwater habitats off north-east Arnhem Land. Indigenous sea rangers and Northern Territory marine scientists have this week been using an underwater video camera to map the seabed around Bremer Island off Nhulunbuy.

The group's lead scientist, Professor Karen Edyvane, says the information is crucial for managing fisheries, aquaculture and development - and the rangers have a lot to contribute. "It's really important because we know so little about the Northern Territory's marine environments," she said. "Indigenous people, as we know, have had a long customary connection with coastal environment and marine environment and have a lot to offer."

Professor Edyvane says one of the best things about the device is that researchers no longer have to get into the water. "The Territory is home to some pretty amazing creatures, but also some which aren't so safe for us in the water," she said. "Particularly the sharks and the crocodiles and the box jellyfish. So it's a very smart way to go in terms of mapping underwater environments particularly deep, murky ones - and being entirely safe."

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

## **WWF supports reef action, farmers unconvinced (Queensland, Australia)**

24 October 2008, ABC News

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) says it supports the Queensland Government's plan to help protect the Great Barrier Reef. The Queensland Government says it has to introduce mandatory regulations on the use of chemicals in agriculture to protect the reef. Queensland Premier Anna Bligh says voluntary land management has not worked.

The plan has been criticised by the Queensland Farmers Federation but WWF says chemical reduction targets must be introduced. Spokesman Nick Health says immediate action is needed. "There's about 700 reefs slowly dying from 14 million tonnes of toxic pollution and we've known about it for 10 years," he said. He says a 25 per cent reduction in chemicals reaching the reef is not enough. Mr Health says the Government must provide enough funding for a mandatory regulatory program that leads to a reduction of 50 per cent run-off getting to the reef.

But Canegrowers, the peak representative body for Australian sugarcane growers, says it wants financial support from the State Government to implement the new regulations. Canegrowers chief executive Ian Ballantyne says farmers want to adopt new strategies to help the reef but mandatory regulation targets may be difficult to introduce. "I think if I had an issue, it really is the issue of reef plan and the failure to achieve targets," he said.

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

## **\$23m to go to protecting Barrier Reef from farming (Queensland, Australia)**

24 October 2008, ABC News

The Queensland Government has defied the wishes of agricultural groups and signaled the introduction of legislation to limit farmers' impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett has told a summit in Brisbane that the Government will spend \$23 million to reduce agriculture damaging the reef. Mr Garrett says the amount of chemicals in agricultural run-off must be reduced by 25 per cent by 2013. He told the summit there is scientific evidence that human activity is killing the reef, and better land management strategies are needed.

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh also addressed the summit, warning that human activity could kill the reef within decades. Ms Bligh says the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen in agricultural run-off is more than four times the level before European settlement. She says the management strategy developed five years ago to protect the Reef is not working and the State Government will consider a regulatory framework.

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

## **Blind Pass restoration plan receives state approval (Sanibel, FL, USA)**

*30 October 2008, Captiva Current*

The Blind Pass restoration project received the last permit requirement during a pre-construction conference on Oct. 24, during which the state's Notice to Proceed was granted. According to Robert Neal of the Lee County Natural Resources Division, everything is in place for the Blind Pass reopening project to go ahead. "The project officially started on Oct. 24 with the state's issuance of the Notice to Proceed," said Neal, noting that the project is going to end in May of next year.

Pre-construction monitoring of the seagrass beds in the Blind Pass area concluded on Oct. 28, and mitigation efforts began the following day, during which seagrass will be transplanted from the work area into Dinkins Bayou.

"Habitat restoration for seagrass beds and mangroves, both in Blind Pass and Dinkins Bayou and Clam Bayou, [and] with that comes improved fishing habitat, increased manatee usage and additional bird usage," Neal said, listing some of the potential environmental advantages of opening the pass.

*Full story and source: <http://www.captivacurrent.com/news/articles.asp?articleID=4268>*

## **Report: Bay cleanup needs to factor in climate change (Annapolis, MD, USA)**

*28 October 2008, Annapolis Capital*

If cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay isn't hard enough as it is, a new report makes it clear that there's another complicating factor to worry about: climate change.

With the reasoning that "the next 50 years from a climactic point of view are not going to look like the last 50 years," the report's authors recommend a rethinking of bay restoration strategies. For example, underwater grass planting and shoreline restoration may have to change due to the sea level rising and temperatures increasing due to global warming. "The clear conclusion of the report is climate change will touch all facets of the Chesapeake Bay Program," said Dr. Chris Pyke, a co-author of the report, "Climate Change and the Chesapeake Bay."

Changing restoration plans could prove to be challenging. For example, one of the key underwater grasses that survives well in the Chesapeake Bay is the salt-loving eelgrass in the southern bay. But this is about the warmest area that eelgrass can tolerate, and the plant also can die during scorching periods in the summer.

If air and water temperatures continue to rise, eelgrass may no longer be viable. Therefore, it may not make sense, for example, to continue to propagate and plant eelgrass in the same areas.

*Full story and source: [http://www.hometownannapolis.com/cgi-bin/read/2008/10\\_28-21/ENV](http://www.hometownannapolis.com/cgi-bin/read/2008/10_28-21/ENV)*

## **What's killing our turtles, dugongs (Mackay, Queensland, Australia)**

*25 October 2008, Daily Mercury*

Denise Abraham is furrowing her brow. She is deeply concerned about the spate of sea animals that have washed up on Armstrong Beach this month. Ms Abraham said in the past four weeks two turtles and two dugongs had been spotted dead just above the water line.

The Environmental Protection Agency downplayed the deaths attributing them to natural causes. A spokesperson said all the animals appeared to have died of natural causes without any evidence of boat strike or other human interference.

The spokesperson said it was possible that fresh water and sediment from flooding earlier in the year may have affected seagrass growth in the area. "As seagrass is the main food source for both turtles and dugongs this may have been a contributing factor to one or more of the recent strandings." The spokesperson said the strandings in the Mackay area this month were consistent with stranding numbers that might be expected at this time of year and those from previous years.

*Full story and source: <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/storydisplay.cfm?storyid=3788748>*

## **Shocking rise in number of turtles killed by boats (Hamilton, Bermuda)**

*24 October 2008, Royal Gazette*

More turtles have been killed by boaters in the past two months than in the whole of last year. Now Marine Police and conservationists are urging boat users to slow down and take extra care in areas close to shore where turtles feed in the vicinity of seagrass beds.

Patrick Talbot, head aquarist at Bermuda Aquarium Museum and Zoo (BAMZ), said it was vital boat operators obeyed marine rules and regulations. He also urged people to avoid dropping trash and rope, fishing line or netting in the water, as turtle deaths due to entanglements are also on the rise.

*Full story and source: <http://www.royalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?articleId=7d8ac3330030003&sectionId=60>*

## GALLERY

### **Motupore Island, Bootless Bay (Papua New Guinea): 24th – 27th October 2008**

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

In late October 2008, Seagrass-Watch HQ visited Motupore Island, near Port Moresby, (Papua New Guinea) to conduct a Seagrass-Watch training exercise as one of the components of the University of Papua New Guinea Marine Training Course. Thirty participants from throughout PNG attended, including local representatives from the local Motuan community attended. As part of the training, 3rd and 4th year UPNG students learnt seagrass identification, seagrass biology, why seagrasses are important and how they are threatened globally, how to monitor and map seagrass meadows, and how to manage the threats that continue to impact seagrass and marine ecosystems.

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

Front Beach, Thursday Island, 23 October 2008  
Back Beach, Thursday Island, 24 October 2008  
Wongai Beach, Horn Island, 25 October 2008  
Corner Beach, Hammond Island, 27 October 2008

### **Nhulunbuy, NE Arnhem Land (NT, Australia): 18 – 20 October 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Seagrass-Watch HQ visited Nhulunbuy in mid October to conduct a training workshop with the Land and Sea Rangers of the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation. The workshop was supported by the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport, Park and Wildlife Commission Northern Territory, Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Seagrass-Watch HQ.

A new monitoring site was established at Giddies River (GR1) in Melville Bay. Workshop participants learnt not only how to monitor their seagrass but also about seagrass mapping and management. As part of the workshop, Neil Smit from NRETAS also demonstrated his Remote Operated Vehicle which is used to assess deeper water seagrass and benthos.

### **Singapore: 17 - 18 October 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Sentosa, 17 October 2008

It's that time of the year for evening tides and under a gloomy sky, the Team assembles to monitor Sentosa. The Sentosa shore is too narrow for the usual kind of set up with the transect tapes. So we do a random sampling here. Although this stretch of natural shore at Sentosa faces our busy world-class container ports, it still has lush growths of *Enhalus acoroides* and *Halophila ovalis*.

*Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore*

Chek Jawa, 18 October 2008

The Team was out in full force today with nearly 30 people to monitor the beautiful marine meadows of Chek Jawa. Chek Jawa's seagrasses seem to be doing well. Because Chek Jawa is so lush, it's important to look carefully. Not all leafy things are seagrasses. Another special seagrass seen on Chek Jawa is *Halophila beccarii*. So far, we have only found it on Chek Jawa and Sungei Buloh..

*Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore*

### **Central Qld (Australia): 13 - 17 October 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Gladstone Harbour, 13 October 2008  
Great Keppel, 15 October 2008  
Sarina, 17 October 2008

## 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.