



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

01 June 2009

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. You are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

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NEWS

Mabuiag Ranger program launched (Torres Strait, Queensland, Australia)

31 May 2009, Torres News

Mabuiag Island community officially has launched its Ranger Project, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), the Torres Strait Islands Regional Council (TSIRC) and the Goemulgaw Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC).

TSRA Deputy Chairperson Ms Napcia Bin Tahal, who was a signatory, said this was the first MOU of its kind in the Torres Strait and represented a good-will partnership between all three parties, made possible through the TSRA administered Torres Strait Indigenous Ranger Program." TSIRC Mayor Fred Gela says the launch of the Ranger

Program on Mabuiag represents the first step towards empowering Torres Strait Islanders to play an active role in the preservation of delicate land and sea resources.

"The MOU signifies a positive step towards realising self determination in the management of traditional land and sea country as well as in the sustainable management of land and sea resources. "I would like to acknowledge the TSIRC and the Goemulgaw PBC for their partnership and participation in this important project, and I also wish to thank the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Program for their support," Ms Bin Tahal said.

It is planned that the Ranger Program be rolled throughout the Torres Strait on a staggered basis, with Rangers planned for Badu, Boigu, Iama, Erub, Mer and Moa Islands as well as the Kaiwalagal region in the near future.

Seagrass-Watch HQ is working closely in partnership with the Indigenous ranger program
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Learning and living with nature (Cairns, Australia)

21 May 2009, The Cairns Post, edited by David Sexton

Seagrass meadows and teaching school age students all about it, is the aim of a new booklet distributed in Torres Strait communities. The booklet explains the role of seagrass meadows and the many forms of life they support.

Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries officer Jane Mellors contributed to the booklet and oversees the Seagrass-Watch program in Torres Strait. "We want to raise awareness and appreciation of the diversity of our living environment, which in turn will encourage students to care for the future of these natural resources," she said. "While the reader is written in English, traditional names (both Kala Lagaw Ya and Meriam Mer) are also used. "The booklet encourages students to explore local marine habitats using the knowledge they may have already gained from traditional storytelling or dance, and the hunting and fishing they do in their spare time."

Head of the Mabuiag campus of Tagai College, Ken Treasure said it was exciting for students to read about things they recognised from their own wanderings on the beach. "The use of Kala Lagaw Ya and Meriam Mer language names throughout this book is extremely timely as Torres Strait island communities are consciously trying to maintain their traditional languages - an initiative supported by Tagai College."

For more information on Seagrass-Watch in the Torres Strait: http://www.seagrasswatch.org/torres_strait.html
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Love in the air for lonely dugong (Australia)

28 May 2009, ABC Online

An Opposition Senator has taken on a match-making role for a lonely male dugong on Cocos Island. The Cocos (Keeling) Islands lie in the Indian Ocean between Australia and Sri Lanka and Country Liberal Party Senator Nigel Scullion says there is only one dugong on Cocos Island.

During a Senate estimates hearing, he suggested the National Parks Service could fly in some female dugongs from the Northern Territory. "The dugong ... is a terrific tourist attraction, he's a young fellow or a middle-aged bloke who staggers around the lagoon. Fantastic bloke," he said.

"Last chat I had to him, he doesn't have any girlfriends and it says here that you have the power to take actions to implement a recovery plan. "Do you think there's any scope for providing a couple of girlfriends? "We've got plenty in Kakadu, plenty in Borroloola." Gerard Early from the Environment Department has agreed to consider the issues involved in moving dugongs to the Island.

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

Related article: <http://livenews.com.au/news/good-bloke-cocos-islands-dugong-wants-a-girlfriend/2009/5/28/208094>

Killing the Ocean (Honiara, Solomon Islands)

27 May 2009, Solomon Times Online

World Ocean Conference and Coral Triangle Initiative participants should urgently consider nutrient pollution is killing coral as photographic evidence indicates, not CO2 induced climate change. Wrong diagnosis can be fatal. World Wildlife Fund and recent Indonesia CTI conference effort must focus on sanitation and proper sewage treatment to overcome nutrient pollution that is feeding algae that in turn is suffocating coral polyps.

Raw sewage is categorically being dumped in uncontrolled and unprecedented quantity into ocean food web nursery waters. Human sewage nutrients are adding to natural nutrient load, the total sometimes forming destructive nutrient pollution. Nutrients are bonded to fresh water that as fresher salt water is being transported in streaming patches within wind-driven ocean surface current. Coastal alongshore current is concentrating and streaming the dumped nutrients over vast distance to other waters, then sometimes nation to nation. Streams and clouds of fresher water with bonded nutrients in the ocean are travelling similar to how moisture clings together in streaks and patches of clouds blown by wind in the sky. The nutrients, like rain, are not always a problem. When heavily polluted fresher salt water saturates an area the over-supply of nutrients feeds and proliferate algae that smothers and kills coral and seagrass food web nursery.

Nutrient pollution is also proliferating algae and epiphyte growth that is smothering absolutely vital estuary and bay and lagoon seagrass on which baitfish and other ocean animals depend. Older people can indicate where seagrass no longer exists amongst mangroves and in bays. Once thriving long seagrass habitat area is now just mud. Seagrass generally is devastated. Seagrass and the devastation and baitfish have been virtually ignored however some studies in the Mediterranean have indicated 400 square meters of seagrass can support 2,000 tonnes of fish annually. Some 'seagrass watching' is now occurring but the science is years behind. Seagrass often depends on coral for sheltered lagoon habitat.

For more information on Seagrass-Watch in the Solomons: http://www.seagrasswatch.org/solomon_islands.html
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Conservation Leadership Programme announces awards (UK)

21 May 2009, BirdLife International

The Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) has announced the winners of the 2009 Team Conservation Awards. This year, the Programme granted 29 awards to research teams in 12 different countries with support totalling \$500,000 (£327,000).

"The awards offered by the CLP provide a launching pad for young professionals who are just beginning a career in the field of environmental conservation", said Robyn Dalzen, CLP Executive Manager. "Through this programme, we are building the capabilities of future leaders and providing them with knowledge, skills and experience to address the most pressing conservation issues of our time."

The CLP supports the vital work of a new generation of rising conservation professionals who are leading a number of diverse, practical projects – from developing an education centre promoting the conservation of important bird areas in Brazil, to protecting freshwater turtles in China, community-based conservation of an endangered tree species in Egypt, and dugong conservation in the Comoros and Madagascar. The programme is a partnership between BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora International, BP, Conservation International and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Read more on C3 in Issues 33 and 35 of Seagrass-Watch News magazine: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Seagrass to be shifted (Western Australia, Australia)

21 May 2009, Busselton Dunsborough Mail

The Environmental Protection Authority has given approval for the removal of most of the accumulated seagrass on the western part of Port Geographe beach. "The seagrass will potentially be used for agricultural or viticultural purposes and its removal will come as good news to local residents who have been concerned about odour impacts," the Minister for Environment, Donna Faragher said.

Mrs Faragher said 75 per cent of the seagrass would be utilised, while the remaining seagrass wrack would remain as habitat for birds and to prevent erosion. She said that in winter up to 100,000m³ of seagrass and sand accumulated on the western breakwater at Port Geographe from decomposing seagrass.

In 2006, the developer of the Port Geographe canal development prepared a 'Four Year Works Program' to manage amenity, noise, odour and complaints from sand and seagrass bypassing. The Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) and the Shire of Busselton approved the program, which concludes at the end of this year.

A seagrass and sand movement study in Geographe Bay being undertaken by DPI, through The University of Western Australia, is due for completion in January. The results of the study will provide base data upon which long-term options for the locality can be prepared.

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

June-September ban on certain fertilizers benefits waterways (Sarasota, FL, USA)

31 May 2009, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

What season starts tomorrow? Hurricane season, of course. Its arrival will be appropriately accompanied by media coverage, predictions and government warnings. But what other season begins tomorrow, at least in Sarasota and Charlotte counties? It's "don't fertilize with nitrogen and phosphorus season."

Sarasota and some other Florida counties have passed laws to prohibit, under most circumstances, the summertime use of fertilizers with nitrogen and phosphorus. Reducing the amount of those elements that enter local waterways makes a positive difference in the quality of the environment which, in turn, benefits the quality of life for a wide range of residents and businesses.

Nitrogen and phosphorus occur naturally, but excessive levels in waters retard the growth of sea grasses, a keystone species in the marine environment. The grasses are vital components of the food chain, provide habitat for sea life and indicate the health of estuaries.

Full story and source: <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090531/OPINION/905311029/-1/NEWSSITEMAP>

'Fireweed of the sea' spreads through Wallagoot Lake (Australia)

29 May 2009, ABC Online

An invasive aquatic weed in a far-south coast waterway is spreading despite attempts to contain it over the past two years. Staff from a number of government agencies have been trying to destroy the weed, *Caleurpa taxifolia*, in Wallagoot Lake, south of Tathra.

Although one outbreak has just been cleaned up another one has been discovered, and there are concerns that further survey work will uncover more. The National Parks Wallagoot Lake Education Centre head Doug Reckord says the weed smothers seagrass beds and can alter the ecology of estuaries.

Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/05/29/2584592.htm>

Related article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/05/29/2584592.htm?site=southeastnsw>

Greenpeace requests EU to investigate failing national protection for Mediterranean seagrass meadows (New York, NY, USA)

27 May 2009, 7thSpace Interactive (press release)

Brussels, International — Greenpeace today filed an official complaint with the European Commission, asking it to enforce EU conservation laws in relation to the protection of Mediterranean seagrass meadows. Greenpeace has provided evidence that French, Greek, Italian and Spanish authorities have violated Community law by failing to provide adequate protection for *Posidonia* seagrass meadows.

"Each time a *Posidonia* seagrass meadow is damaged or destroyed, we lose a vital life-support structure in the Mediterranean. Seagrass meadows are sanctuaries and nursery grounds that provide protection for more than a thousand marine creatures, and they are a crucial source of oxygen production," said Francois Provost, Greenpeace International oceans campaigner.

"Spain, France, Italy and Greece have failed to protect conservation areas under the EU's nature laws and often allow destructive fishing in important spawning and nursery areas," said Saskia Richartz, EU Oceans Policy Adviser for Greenpeace. "Our complaint documents the scale of inaction and asks the European Commission to ensure that EU laws are applied."

The Mediterranean urgently needs an ambitious network of marine reserves that will effectively protect vital habitats, allow for the recovery of overfished species and boost the resilience of ecosystems to climate change. *Posidonia* meadows should be a key component of the network of marine reserves in the Mediterranean. Greenpeace is campaigning for such a network of reserves to cover 40% of our oceans.

Full story and source:

http://7thspace.com/headlines/310177/greenpeace_requests_eu_to_investigate_failing_national_protection_for_mediterranean_seagrass_meadows.html

Hernando Beach Channel dredge project reaches bid selection (St. Petersburg, FL, USA)

26 May 2009, Tampabay.com

BROOKSVILLE — At long last, county commissioners are taking the final steps toward beginning the dredge of the Hernando Beach Channel.

This summer, work will begin to widen, lengthen, deepen and straighten the Hernando Beach Channel; replace navigational markers; plant seagrasses, mark seagrass beds, and dispose of the spoils. The details will be explained to residents in a public meeting in the coming weeks, according to Charles Mixson, public works director. The project is expected to be completed by next summer.

But to Commissioner Rose Rocco, whose district includes Hernando Beach, the impacts will be obvious. She sees the project as the first step in revitalizing the community, where residents have been unable to fully enjoy the waterfront. Beyond just helping the waterfront home owners and boat owners, Rocco said this project has been needed to kick-start the small businesses and the fishing industry, which have been waiting for the dredge for so long.

Full story and source: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/localgovernment/article1004294.ece>

Acid oceans may not be so bad (Wellington, NZ)

19 May 2009, Science Alert

Victoria University Master's student Michael Doherty says his research shows that ocean acidification may have no negative effect on photosynthetic production by tropical corals and local sea anemones - in fact it may improve photosynthesis. However, the affects of acidification on coral calcification still have the potential to cause massive loss of coral reefs.

"Plants and algae get carbon from the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide, and photosynthesis is the process by which the organism turns this carbon into sugar—providing essential energy for life. Algae live within 'animals' like corals and anemones, and through photosynthesis provide energy for themselves and the animal," says Mr Doherty.

"What we found is that ocean acidification was making the algae photosynthesise more, because more carbon dioxide was available to them. This means they produce more energy for themselves and, as a result, for the animal too."

However, he says the energy needs of the animal seem to increase too, meaning the coral or anemone is likely to be no better or worse off. He says it's important to note that although from a photosynthetic point of view tropical corals may be fine in acidic waters, there is still a risk. "The tropical coral already faces a problem in that it won't be able to form a skeleton in predicted acidic conditions. Sea anemones on the other hand won't face this problem because they have no skeleton to begin with—so it's entirely likely that they could be better off in acidic waters."

Full story and source: <http://www.sciencealert.com.au/news-nz/20091905-19139.html>

SAMPLING DATES

Marine Plants are protected in Queensland, Australia. Collection of marine plants for educational, research or monitoring purposes is permitted in accordance with code MP05 of the Fisheries Act and Integrated Planning Act.

Seagrass-Watch participants in Queensland are instructed to adhere to Self-assessable code MP05, by notifying Seagrass-Watch HQ before monitoring commences (see section 5.6 and Schedule 2) and to display appropriate signage (see section 5.7). . <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/monitoring.html>

NB: In Queensland, registered Seagrass-Watch participants are covered under the DPI&F Seagrass-Watch HQ's Marine Plant and Marine Park permits (i.e. no fee required). A requirement of the permit is to notify Seagrass-Watch HQ of sampling dates so that the appropriate authorities are informed. Sampling dates are also posted on the Seagrass-Watch website. If you are unsure if you are covered, check with Seagrass-Watch HQ <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH WORKSHOPS 2009

Australia

Broome, WA, August 23-24 (Registration closes 17th August 09)

For more information: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop09>

CALL FOR ARTICLES: ISSUE 37 SEAGRASS-WATCH NEWS

Call for articles Issue 37 of Seagrass-Watch News: *The official magazine of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program:* <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

We are now calling for articles on seagrass research for Issue 37 of Seagrass-Watch News. If you would like to submit an article, please contact Seagrass-Watch HQ : hq@seagrasswatch.org ASAP so we can allocate space in the document layout. Closing date for articles for the issue is 08 June 2009.

CONFERENCES

CERF 2009 (Oregon (USA), 1 -5 November 2009)

Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Conference (CERF) will host a seagrass program titled, "Seagrass Ecosystem Health in a Global Perspective". Seagrass Ecosystem Health in a Global Perspective will include four half day sessions:

- Seagrass Physiological Stress: In Sickness and in Health (SCI-108)
- Seagrass Assessment: Think Globally, Monitor Locally (SCI-105)
- Seagrass Ecological Health: Diagnosing the Canary (SCI-106)
- Seagrass Management and Policy: Proactive Sustainability (SCI-107)

More information: <http://erf.org/cerf2009/>

GALLERY

Cyrene Reef (Singapore): 27 May 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

It's another early departure for a tiny band of Seagrassers. We depart from the very swank Marina at Keppel Bay and were nearly turned away by the super tight security folks. Fortunately, we managed to convince them that we were genuine customers and soon we were off in a brand new boat arrangement with Thye and Jumari.

Bowen (Qld, Australia): 24 May 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

We had lovely weather and good tides today enabling 19 of us to hit the meadows. The partnership built between the community and the Scouts remains strong with both groups well represented.

Shelley Beach (Qld, Australia): 22 May 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

We noticed that compared to the February monitoring, the algae in the area had increased and so too had the percent cover of seagrass.

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 36 <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.