



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

02 March 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

Lucky few see turtles hatch (Cairns, Australia)

26 February 2009, *The Cairns Post*

Tourists at Green Island got a rare thrill this week, as 100 green turtles hatchlings scrambled from their nests and made a bid for freedom.

Quicksilver Group environmental and compliance manager Doug Baird said several other nests were found on the island this season. It is thought it is the first time in six years that turtles have nested on the island.

Read more on Green Island. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/cairns.html#GI1>
 more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Indigenous Rangers wow International Turtle Conference (Australia)

23 February 2009, Charles Darwin University

Indigenous Sea Rangers from northern Australia have impressed international delegates attending the 29th Sea Turtle Symposium in Brisbane with their world-leading approach to turtle management.

Indigenous Sea Rangers from the Kimberley, Top End of the Northern Territory, Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait Islands spoke of their success in working together to conserve marine turtles across northern Australia, one of the world's last strongholds for marine turtles. The rangers are part of a north Australian project run by Indigenous people to manage marine turtle on a regional scale that matches the large migratory range of the animals—the first project of its kind in the world.

The President of the International Sea Turtle Society Dr Colin Limpus presented the Dhimurru Rangers with a "Champions Award" last night, recognising their leadership in sea turtle conservation and sea country management.

Read more on Torres Strait. http://www.seagrasswatch.org/torres_strait.html

Read more on Northern Territory. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/NorthernTerritory.html>
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Bioremediation to keep atrazine from waterways (Australia)

17 February 2009, CSIRO Media Release

"When we added the enzyme to a holding dam filled with run-off contaminated with atrazine, more than 90 per cent of it was removed in less than four hours," says CSIRO Entomology's Dr Colin Scott. "Atrazine is a widely used and extremely useful herbicide but, depending on its use, can lead to residues that persist in water for sometime after application. Undesirable residues in water have led to restrictions on the use of atrazine in the EU and USA.

The successful trial was held in the Burdekin sugar growing region near Ayr in Queensland and the results are very promising for reducing contamination in run-off that reaches the Great Barrier Reef.

The CSIRO bioremediation team is now focusing on improving the production and application of the enzyme, to provide farmers and water consumers around the world with a cost effective bioremediation product to address triazine contamination.

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

Municipalities Wait On The Omnibus Bill To Jumpstart Regional Programs (Southampton, NY, USA)

27 February 2009, Hamptons.com

Political leaders on the South Fork are looking towards the passage of federal legislation this week that will pump an estimated \$410 billion into programs around the country as some of this funding makes it way to the South Fork. President Obama is expected to sign the bill as Democratic Party supporters emphasized the need for increased federal spending at all levels to bolster the economy.

In Southampton Town, according to a press release issued by Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) on Feb. 24, an estimated \$3.2 million will be allocated to the Town for operations and maintenance of the Shinnecock Canal. The funding will also be used for environmental projects aimed at saving the area's coastlines and protecting the clean water infrastructure.

The bill also provides a \$500,000 allocation for the Nature Conservancy for projects on Long Island and in Connecticut. The money will be used to restore seagrass in the Peconic Bay and the Great South Bay watersheds.

Full story and source: <http://www.hamptons.com/detail.ihtml?id=6517&apid=13343&sid=27&cid=54&hm=1&iv=1&townflag=>

Governor Crist Opens Florida Aquarium's New Seagrass Exhibit (Lorain, OH, USA)

26 February 2009, Zoo and Aquarium Visitor News

Governor Charlie Crist today marked the official opening of a new educational exhibit at The Florida Aquarium entitled Seagrass, a joint venture between the aquarium and The Ocean Foundation. The exhibit increases public awareness about Florida's fragile seagrass ecosystems and supports restoration of these vital habitats in the Tampa region.

Governor Crist was joined at the exhibit opening by Thom Stork, president and chief executive officer of The Florida Aquarium; president of The Ocean Foundation Mark J. Spalding; and a host of community officials to proclaim March as Seagrass Awareness Month.

"We are pleased to be working with The Ocean Foundation on this unique educational partnership to encourage awareness of the region's seagrass beds," said Stork. "With nearly 700,000 visitors to the aquarium each year, the exhibit will engage visitors about current protection efforts while at the same time aid The Ocean Foundation's restoration efforts."

To learn more about The Florida Aquarium visit www.flaquarium.org.

Read more on Seagrass Recovery and Restore a Scar program in Issues 34 and 35 Seagrass-Watch News:

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

Full story and source: http://www.zandavisitor.com/newsarticle-995-Governor_Crist_Opens_Florida_Aquarium%27s_New_Seagrass_Exhibit

Lake marine life focus of power station study (Newcastle, Australia)

26 February 2009, Newcastle Herald

ERARING Power Station said yesterday it would spend \$300,000 over three years to research marine life in Lake Macquarie. The announcement comes three months after The Herald revealed that the power station killed tens of thousands of Lake Macquarie's fish every year when they became caught in its inlet canal.

"The money will fund specific studies targeting the improved quality of habitat, fish, turtles and seagrass in the lake," an Eraring statement said.

Eraring made the announcement after holding a meeting yesterday with community and government representatives, chaired by Lake Macquarie Mayor and MP Greg Piper. Eraring said working groups would be formed to review studies and develop plans. Eraring general manager Wayne Winterbine said the research would help determine long-term environmental policies for marine life in the lake.

Full story and source: <http://www.theherald.com.au/news/local/news/general/lake-marine-life-focus-of-power-station-study/1444205.aspx>

Boaters - Keep off the grass! (Orlando, FL, USA)

25 February 2009, Sailing Florida

It's a lesson for anyone who sails around Florida – keep off the grass – seagrass that is. It could cost you big.

In a lawsuit filed this month in federal court, the National Park Services is suing Marlow Marine for \$240,000 for damage to the environment when the boat ran aground in 2006 in Florida Bay, part of the Everglades National Park.

The 72-foot yacht, Rebel Yell, ran aground on Arsenic Bank on its way to the Miami boat show. After unsuccessfully trying to float the yacht off the shoal for several days, the boat powered over the sandbar. The NPS says in doing so, the prop dug a channel through the shoal and tore up two different types of seagrass, which provides a nursery and feeding ground for many aquatic species. Marlow Marine is contesting, saying the navigational aids were inadequate.

It is the second lawsuit this year for a similar incident in 2003 when a boat owner ran aground near Key West. The cost of damages in the second incident is set at \$600,000.

Full story and source: http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/sports_sailingflorida/2009/02/boaters-keep-off-the-grass.html

Related links: <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090223/ARTICLE/902230336/0/SPORTS>

Heritage hope for new sites (Manama, Bahrain)

25 February 2009, Gulf Daily News

A marine ecosystem that stretches across Bahrain and other GCC countries could be nominated as a World Heritage Site. Particular marine areas in the east of Bahrain have the potential to be part of a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) World Heritage Marine Site because of their seagrass and dugong (sea cow) population, said a heritage expert.

"Bahrain's seagrass and dugongs could be a possibility for a World Heritage Marine Site," Culture and Information Ministry adviser for natural heritage Dr Saeed Al Khuzai'e told the GDN. "But it will be part of a large area because the population of dugongs are also from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and maybe even the UAE.

Dr Al Khuzai'e was speaking on the sidelines of the opening of the three-day workshop on the global marine heritage site selection and world heritage and marine protected areas in the Gulf and Red Sea.

Full story and source: <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=243959&Sn=BNEW&IssueID=31342>

Governor Crist Celebrates Protection of Florida's Seagrasses (Tallahassee, FL, USA)

24 February 2009, WCTV

GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION

SEAGRASS AWARENESS MONTH

WHEREAS, the seagrass community of Florida is the largest seagrass meadow in the world; and

WHEREAS, the seagrass community supports hundreds of species of fish, sea turtles, manatees and other wildlife at various stages of their development; and

WHEREAS, although seagrass is often perceived as less glamorous than corals, it is equally important, providing a multiplicity of functions that contribute to a healthy and viable marine ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, in 2008 alone, seagrass communities in the state of Florida supported an estimated harvest of \$36.6 million for six seagrass-dependent, commercial species of fish and shellfish; and

WHEREAS, while more than 2.6 million acres of seagrass were reported in Florida in 1995, more than 173,960 acres had propeller scars; and

WHEREAS, seagrass stabilizes bottom sediments and helps to absorb the excess nutrients from land run-off which can further damage the quality of our waters; and

WHEREAS, awareness of the problems facing this vital natural resource will help to create an understanding of the ways seagrass damage can impact both the economic and ecological value of our marine resources;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Charlie Crist, Governor of the State of Florida, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing March 2009 as Seagrass Awareness Month.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capitol, this 24th day of February, in the year two thousand nine.

Full story and source: <http://www.wctv.tv/news/headlines/40251457.html>

Wetlands endure urban expansion (Metro,Australia)

24 February 2009, Where I Live - News Community Media

Moreton Bay's wetlands are holding their own despite increased development in the region, says Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland president Simon Baltais. Mr Baltais said the local area, which is monitored by the society's bayside branch, had remained unchanged in recent years.

Mangrove and seagrass communities in the Moreton Bay region were monitored three times a year by volunteers. "Volunteers adopt a 50sq m site and use the results to help decision making for marine parks and ecosystem health." There are four monitored sites within the Pumicestone Passage.

Mr Baltais stressed the importance of wetlands to industries and wildlife. "Wetlands support marine and tourism resources; they protect coastal and riverside communities and their wildlife habitat maintains a healthy biodiversity across the state," he said.

Read more on Moreton Bay. http://www.seagrasswatch.org/moreton_bay.html

Full story and source: <http://northern-times.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wetlands-endure-urban-expansion/>

Nutrient Pollution Chokes Marine And Freshwater Ecosystems (USA)

19 February 2009, Science Daily (press release)

Protecting drinking water and preventing harmful coastal "dead zones", as well as eutrophication in many lakes, will require reducing both nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. Because streams and rivers are conduits to the sea, management strategies should be implemented along the land-to-ocean continuum. In most cases, strategies that focus only on one nutrient will fail.

These policy recommendations were put forth by a team of distinguished scientists in the recent issue of Science, published February 20. Led by Dr. Daniel J. Conley, a marine ecologist at the GeoBiosphere Science Centre in Sweden and a Visiting Scientist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, the paper reviews weaknesses in single-nutrient management strategies. In most cases, improving water quality and preserving coastal oceans will require a two-pronged approach.

Dr. Gene E. Likens, one of the paper's authors and an ecologist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, comments, "Historically, environmental management strategies in freshwater systems have focused on reducing phosphorus pollution. While this has minimized freshwater algal blooms, it passed a great deal of nitrogen pollution on to coastal ecosystems, driving eutrophication and causing serious and widespread problems in those regions." These environmental problems include reductions in the oxygen levels of coastal water, which can cause "dead zones" and fish die-offs; the proliferation of undesirable plant growth; reductions in water quality; and the loss of important coastal fish habitat, such as seagrass and kelp beds.

Full story and source: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/02/090219141533.htm>

Google Earth Fills Its Watery Gaps

02 February 2009, The New York Times

Two and a half years ago, the software engineers behind Google Earth, the searchable online replica of the planet, were poised to fill an enormous data gap, adding the two-thirds of the globe that is covered by water in reality and was blue, and blank, online. On Monday, the ocean images undergo the most significant of several upgrades to Google Earth, with the new version downloadable free at earth.google.com, according to the company.

The replicated seas have detailed topography reflecting what is known about the abyss and continental shelves — and rougher areas where little is known. With only 5 percent of the ocean floor mapped in detail, and 1 percent of the oceans protected, Google executives and the marine scientists who helped build the digital oceans said they hoped the result would inspire the public to support more marine exploration and conservation.

Full story and source: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/03/science/earth/03oceans.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1

SEAGRASS-WATCH WORKSHOPS 2009

Australia

Torres Strait, March 4 (Registration closes 25th February 2009)

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

Cooktown, March 9-10 (Registration closes 27th February 2009)

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

Asia

Singapore, May 02 -03 (Registration closes 20th April 2009)

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

Bali, May 09-10 (Registration closes 20th April 2009)

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

SEAGRASS-WATCH FIELD DAYS 2009

Australia

Whitsunday, QLD: April 5, 2009 (RSVP by 04 April 2009)

For more information and registration: http://www.seagrasswatch.org/extension.html#PI_Ap09

CALL FOR ARTICLES: ISSUE 36 SEAGRASS-WATCH NEWS

Call for articles Issue 36 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 36 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 09 March 2009.

GALLERY

Suva, Viti Levu (Fiji) : 14 February 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

VALENTINE'S DAY this year was a special one for twenty-four Grade 7 International School students after spending it on the sandy mud-flats at Nasese surveying the seagrass meadows. The survey kicked off just after 2 pm guided by four teachers. Despite the afternoon heat, it felt great to finally kick-start seagrass surveys in Fiji. The infective enthusiasm of the students really made the day enjoyable and time just whizzed by. *Text: Posa Skelton, Fiji local coordinator.*

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 35 <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 HQ is supported by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries and by private donations.

Seagrass-Watch E- Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.