



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

**13 August 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

### **World's most diverse marine environment at risk (Glasgow,Scotland,UK)**

07 August 2009, The Herald

The world's most diverse marine ecosystem is under threat from warming ocean temperatures, rising sea levels and more storms as a result of climate change, conservationists have warned. The Verde Island Passage, a corridor of coral-filled tropical waters in the Philippines, has the world's highest concentration of marine species - including whale sharks, giant clams and the iconic Banggai cardinal fish. But Conservation International say urgent action is needed to protect the region in the face of climate change and the over-exploitation of natural resources - to save its wildlife, fisheries and the livelihoods of local people.

A meeting of scientists, organised by Conservation International to assess the impacts of climate change on the Verde Island Passage, called for immediate action from the global community to protect "this hugely important site". They warned the impacts of global climate change, combined with over-exploitation of resources, are threatening the marine habitats. They said it will also affect fisheries and the tourism industry of this popular destination, with consequences for the well-being of nearly two million people who rely on them for food and income.

A series of measures to protect the passage were recommended by scientists -such as ensuring that seagrass beds, mangroves and other habitats that provide important ecological services are included in protected areas. Dr Giuseppe Di Carlo, Conservation International's marine climate change manager, said: "The marine habitats and species of the Verde Island Passage are already threatened by human impacts like overfishing, pollution and coastal infrastructure development. "Climate change is intensifying these impacts, with severe consequences for the well-being of the people of the area, since they depend on fishing and the tourism industry."

*Full story and source:*

[http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/news/display.var.2524246.0.Worlds\\_leading\\_marine\\_wildlife\\_hotspot\\_is\\_under\\_threat.php](http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/news/display.var.2524246.0.Worlds_leading_marine_wildlife_hotspot_is_under_threat.php)

*Related article:* <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/aug2009/2009-08-10-01.asp> ,

<http://www.thetechherald.com/article.php/200933/4219/Climate-change-threatens-globe-s-most-diverse-marine-ecosystem>

### **Man fined \$100,000 for boat ramp (Connecticut, USA)**

06 August 2009, WTNH

Montville - An illegal boat ramp leads to a hefty fine against its owner in Montville. Michael Liebig didn't think it a was a big deal when he cleared away seagrass along the river at his Montville home. The problem is he didn't have a permit. He also built an eleven foot wide concrete boat ramp also without a permit.

Now, the Montville man faces one of the state's largest fines for violating tidal wetlands law. "I can't afford a \$100,000 fine," he said. "I mean, it's gonna break me." Liebig said he removed most of the boat launch after receiving a Cease and Desist Order from the DEP in October 2006.

But the state took action because he didn't finish the job or restore the wetlands which will cost about \$75,000. "I have to hire a scientist to make the mud," said Liebig. "I have to hire someone to grow the grass." Liebig hopes if he restores the wetlands, the state may give him a break on the fine. With summer almost half over, he wouldn't really be able to begin that restoration until the spring.

*Full story and source:* [http://www.wtnh.com/dpp/news/new\\_london\\_cty/news\\_wtnh\\_montville\\_man\\_fined\\_ramp\\_boat\\_200908061830\\_rev1](http://www.wtnh.com/dpp/news/new_london_cty/news_wtnh_montville_man_fined_ramp_boat_200908061830_rev1)

### **Jensen Beach Moorings facility explained at public meeting (Stuart,FL,USA)**

Stuart News (subscription) -

Martin County residents – most of them boaters – learned about the proposed \$1.83 million Jensen Beach Moorings facility during a public meeting at the Jensen Beach Chamber of Commerce Wednesday. Tim Blankenship, director of engineering at Coastal Systems International – the company that will build the mooring field if the County Commission approves it – explained the proposal and its benefits to the assembled crowd. A mooring field, he said, is an area on the water where multiple mooring buoys are installed. A mooring buoy is used to float a chain or cable that's connected to an anchor secured to the sea floor.

The Moorings would accommodate 61 vessels ranging from 20 to 60 feet in length and help the county reduce or eliminate the environmental impact to seagrass beds, Blankenship said. It would give the county the ability to prevent illegal dumping of waste and take action against derelict vessels, which are boats that have been abandoned and may leak oil.

Residents at the meeting expressed concerns that some boaters would simply anchor at the unregulated north side of the Jensen Beach Causeway, but Martin County coastal engineer Kathy Fitzpatrick said legislation allowing counties to control all anchoring is likely to pass in Tallahassee by 2011, around the time the proposed moorings would be completed.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2009/aug/05/jensen-beach-moorings-facility-explained-public-me/>

### **Mother Nature gives Blind Pass early debut (Fort Myers,FL,USA)**

04 August 2009, The News-Press

Clear, clean green water from the Gulf of Mexico flowed through Blind Pass on Monday morning, prematurely and courtesy of Mother Nature.

In December 2008, Energy Resources Inc. of Chesterfield, Mo., started a \$3.2 million project to open the pass, which had been closed since 2001. By Friday, the dredging was done; on Wednesday, Energy Resources was scheduled to pull a sheet pile wall that separated the Gulf and the pass. But Friday night, high seas kicked up by a thunderstorm punched a 30-foot-wide gap through the berm on the south side of the wall, and the Gulf poured in.

Blind Pass has a history of opening and closing; when it closes, water on the bayside can't flush into the Gulf, so it becomes stagnant, and seagrass beds and fish and invertebrate populations decline. "Look at the contrast between the color of the water inside the pass and in the Gulf of Mexico," said Michael Mullins, president of the Captiva

Erosion Prevention District. "The lack of flushing has been an environmental disaster for us, for the wildlife and seagrasses. This is going to be a big improvement."

Researchers from the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Marine Laboratory are conducting a study to compare water quality and condition of seagrasses in and around Blind Pass before and after the pass was opened.  
*Full story and source:* <http://www.news-press.com/article/20090804/GREEN/908040343/1015>

### **Bay dredging almost over (Australia)**

01 August 2009, The Australian

More than 500 days and one million man-hours after it began 18 months ago, Melbourne's channel-deepening project is more than 90 per cent complete and the Port of Melbourne is hailing it as a major success. Two tranches remain to be completed, but 21.3 million cubic metres have now been removed from the floor of Port Phillip Bay and the completion date has been revised from the end of the year to the end of this month.

While environmentalists say a rock fall in 2005 caused "irreplacable damage" and there was unknown damage to sponge gardens, Port of Melbourne chief executive Stephen Bradford said the environmental impact was "very minimal" and some recovery had already begun. He said while it had been expected 5 per cent of seagrass would be lost, it would be "much less than that" because turbidity had been much less than predicted and the project was finishing ahead of schedule.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25865083-30417,00.html>

### **County seeks second seagrass site(Florida, USA)**

29 July 2009, Hernando Today

Brooksville - The state has asked Hernando County to find another place to replant over six acres of seagrass that will be in the way of the Hernando Beach dredging project. It turns out the protection area south of Hernando Beach that the county originally intended to replant the seagrass is no longer tenable because the existing seagrass there has grown back in the three or four years of permit delays.

The new growth is a good thing, County Engineer Charles Mixson said. But it forces the county to seek a new site because the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) said the old site no longer qualifies as part of the mitigation process. Before granting a permit, the DEP mandated the county had to "mitigate" or replant the misplaced seagrass somewhere else.

Mixson told county commissioners on Tuesday he is looking north of the original site, between Bayport and Jenkins Creek where there are several seagrass "scars" present. Scarring is typically caused when boat propellers tear up the seagrass, leaving large areas completely denuded. Commissioners voted 5-0 to hold a public hearing Aug. 11 to modify its seagrass regeneration protection zone ordinance to add the Bayport site.

*Full story and source:* <http://www2.hernandotoday.com/content/2009/jul/29/county-seeks-second-seagrass-site/news/>

### **Administrative hearing to settle dispute over planned Pine Island marina (FL, USA)**

28 July 2009, The News-Press

The South Florida Water Management District and Highpoint Tower Technology Inc. have asked for an administrative hearing to resolve the case of the Bocilla Seaport Marina. In 2007, Highpoint applied to the district to build a 209,000-square-foot marina for boats up to 70 feet long on the north end of Pine Island.

A revised plan reduced the size to 50,000 square feet, but the district denied the permit because the marina would create "direct and secondary impacts to seagrasses," and "does not demonstrate that the project is clearly within the public interest." Highpoint appealed the district's decision.

"We tried to negotiate, but we couldn't come to terms," said Phil Flood, director of the district's Lower West Coast Service Area. "We still have concerns about the adverse effects of the project, particularly the effects on seagrass."

*Full story and source:* <http://www.news-press.com/article/20090728/NEWS0113/90728060/1075>

### **Maps reveal secret life of marine turtles in urgent need of protection**

28 July 2009, WWF International

A series of conservation maps produced by WWF reveal for the first time the secret life of endangered turtles in the world's most diverse marine region – the Coral Triangle. The maps are the first to bring together the different life cycle movements, migration routes, foraging grounds, and nesting sites of green, hawksbill and leatherback turtles.

The maps were produced with the help of satellite tracking, and allow the identification and targeting of areas in urgent need of protection. They also highlight the inter-connectedness of marine habitats making a strong case for cooperation among Coral Triangle countries for the protection of shared marine resources in the region.

"We now have a better picture and more comprehensive understanding of where marine turtles feed, breed, and nest around the waters of the Coral Triangle," says Matheus Halim, WWF Coral Triangle Turtle Strategy Leader. Marine

turtles play a crucial role in the delicate web of ocean life by maintaining the health of seagrass beds and coral reefs, which are home to other marine species such as shrimp, lobster, sharks, dugongs and innumerable reef fish.

The maps serve as a guideline for where to establish Marine Protected Areas. "The maps clearly identify which areas in this region need protection", added Halim. "WWF is calling for the establishment of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that encompass these locations as part of the new six nations Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) and for turtles to be made a priority under The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)."

*Full story and source:* [http://www.panda.org/wwf\\_news/?170981/Maps-reveal-secret-life-of-marine-turtles-in-urgent-need-of-protection](http://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?170981/Maps-reveal-secret-life-of-marine-turtles-in-urgent-need-of-protection)

## **HDD integral for new cable across Botany Bay (Australia)**

27 July 2009, Trenchless International

Work has started on a \$A200 million project that will connect two major EnergyAustralia substations via Sydney's Botany Bay, using horizontal directional drilling to protect the sensitive environment. Drilling work to construct seven 450 mm diameter underground holes, to reach 200 metres into the Bay, has started on Anzac Parade in La Perouse.

EnergyAustralia General Manager of Engineering Geoff Lilliss said that every stage of the project has been carefully planned and communicated to the community via 6,000 newsletters. "We've prepared a seagrass management plan with the Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change and the Department of Primary Industries to make sure the seagrass will be protected," Mr Lilliss said.

"We have also employed a marine ecologist, who helped develop the seagrass plan and will continue to closely monitor the Bay both during and after the work is completed. "An independent seagrass expert from the NSW Department of Primary Industries will also review our work, step by step, across the seagrass bed."

*Full story and source:* [http://trenchlessinternational.com/news/hdd\\_integral\\_for\\_new\\_cable\\_across\\_botany\\_bay/004133/](http://trenchlessinternational.com/news/hdd_integral_for_new_cable_across_botany_bay/004133/)

## **CALL FOR ARTICLES: ISSUE 38 SEAGRASS-WATCH NEWS**

**Issue 38, 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 38 of Seagrass-Watch News. If you would like to submit an article, please contact Seagrass-Watch HQ : [hq@seagrasswatch.org](mailto:hq@seagrasswatch.org) ASAP so we can allocate space in the document layout. Closing date for articles for the issue is 08 September 2009.

## **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>

## **SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube**

**Seagrass: Pastures of the sea** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vqswj20> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>

Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important.

## **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/>

### **ICSED2009 (Trang, Thailand, 2 – 4 December 2009)**

International Conference on Seagrass Ecology and Dugong 2009: "Rehabilitation & Sustainability"

The conference will focus on current seagrass ecology issues and sustainable small-scale seagrass fisheries. The conference will contribute to the resolution of important issues which are threatening to both humans and seagrass aquatic organisms. The attendees are expected to share a viewpoint of global seagrass management based on their own backgrounds and experience. Conference topics will include:

1. SEAGRASS BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM FUNCTIONING

*To include:*

- Hotspots, patterns and drivers in seagrass biodiversity in Asia.
  - Relationship between ecosystem functioning and biodiversity.
  - Reef-seagrass-mangrove connections: the landscape approach
  - Relationship between ecosystem functioning and the sustainable use of seagrass biodiversity across Asia
2. CONSEQUENCES OF SEAGRASS BIODIVERSITY CHANGE
- To include:
- Impacts of degradation on ecosystem structure in marine food webs and on dugong
  - Red tides, Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)
  - Seagrass Ecosystems, dugong and global climate change
3. CONSERVATION OF SEAGRASS BIODIVERSITY AND DUGONG
- To include:
- Applications of scientific, social and cultural data and information; resource valuation
  - Habitat restoration using artificial systems
  - Marine Protected Areas: Successes, failures and future prospects
4. INTEGRATED COASTAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS
- To include case studies on:
- Role of NGOs, POs, the local government and the community
  - Linking science to policy
  - Integrated decision support systems

Important dates:

- 30 August 2009: Deadline for abstract submission
- 30 September 2009: Notification of acceptance
- 15 October 2009: Deadline for full paper submission
- 15 October 2009: Deadline for early registration

More information: <http://icsed2009.rmutsv.ac.th/index.html>

## GALLERY

**Mer Island, TI (Qld, Australia): 31 July -02 August 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

*Over the weekend, we monitored MR1, set up a new site (MR2) on the other side of the island. We even got a new member of the seagrass-watch team – Uncle Sabz, joined Moses, Jane and I.*

**Pulau Semakau (Singapore): 26 July 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

*TeamSeagrass is back on Pulau Semakau today! Though the weather forecast was for a storm with thunder and lightning, and it got ominous as we started the ferry trip, we went ahead anyway. Aside from a few rumbles and light flashes in the sky, the weather seemed to have settled into a murky gloom when we arrived at our start point.*

**Cullen Point, Mapoon (Qld, Australia): 23 July 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Napranum, Weipa (Qld, Australia): 21 July 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Archer Point, Cooktown (Qld, Australia): 20 July 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

## FROM HQ

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

**Seagrass-Watch News Issue 37** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.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.