



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

**21 April 2009**

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## NEWS

### ***Herbicide drainage harms reef (Queensland, Australia)***

*14 April 2009, Science Alert*

A comprehensive research program investigating pesticide residue run-off has revealed a suite of herbicides in rivers and creeks and in marine waters within the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. The runoff of pesticide residues were monitored in the Tully-Murray, Burdekin-Townsville and Mackay Whitsunday Regions over four wet seasons (2005-2008), with a focus on key land uses within these regions. The land uses include sugar cane, grazing, horticulture, urban and natural/conservation.

Dr Stephen Lewis from the Australian Centre for Tropical Freshwater Research (ACTFR) at James Cook University (JCU) said that the results show that a suite of herbicides including diuron, atrazine, ametryn and hexazinone have been commonly detected in waterways draining sugar cane lands. "Some concentrations exceeded either locally-derived marine water quality trigger values for species protection or laboratory-based lowest observable effect levels for marine plants including coral zooxanthellae and seagrass," Dr Lewis said.

Mr Jon Brodie, principal research officer at JCU's ACTFR, said that the results from the study have been presented to growers and graziers across the regions over the past three years. These best management practices for sugar

and grazing industries have now been developed within each region through the Federal Government's Water Quality Improvement Plan process.

"However," Mr Brodie said, "the results show that herbicide runoff from agricultural lands are of concern to marine ecosystems of the Great Barrier Reef and are sometimes at concentrations which would directly affect seagrass and coral reef species, at least temporarily." The research has been published in the peer-reviewed online scientific journal, Environmental Pollution.

*Read more Reef Rescue MMP results in 35 Seagrass-Watch News: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>*

*Full story and source: <http://www.sciencealert.com.au/news/20091404-19017.html>*

### **House panel to fast-track bill saving coastal waters (Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines)**

*19 April 2009, GMA news.tv*

The House of Representatives has assured that it would fast-track at the committee level a bill establishing an environment program to save the country's deteriorating coastal waters. Former House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. (Pangasinan), one of the authors of the bill, said it is alarming that only 4.3 percent of the country's coral reefs are in excellent condition.

In calling for the speedy passage of the bill, De Venecia also warned that about 30 to 40 percent of sea grass was lost over the last 50 years. For her part, Rep. Cynthia Villar (Las Pinas) said the enactment of a law on coastal environment management is badly needed especially now that the coastal areas in the country are deteriorating due to marine and land-based pollution. House Natural Resources Committee chairman Rep. Ignacio Arroyo (Negros Occidental) asked representatives of various agencies to submit their position papers on overlapping provisions between existing laws and the proposed measure.

Arroyo said all positions and views on the matter should be taken into consideration to create a much better coastal environment program. Issues discussed during the hearings included the current problems and anticipated issues with respect to coastal waters, river systems, prohibited structures, activities within the coastal areas, and the powers of implementors.

*Full story and source: <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/157665/House-panel-to-fast-track-bill-saving-coastal-waters>*

### **Environmental questions over LNG hub (Perth, WA, Australia)**

*16 April 2009, WA today*

The Australian Greens have attacked a move to locate a multibillion-dollar liquefied natural gas hub in WA's Kimberley region, saying it could have a serious impact on the local environment. Gas giant Woodside last night reached an agreement to situate the project at James Price Point, 60 kilometres north of Broome. Greens Senator Rachel Siewert criticised the move saying investigations and planning for the site were still incomplete.

Ms Siewert said she was concerned about the unknown environmental impacts to James Price Point, which was a tropical marine ecosystem that supported important fish aggregations and turtle and dugong populations. She called for a full environmental assessment of the site by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

*Full story and source: <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/environmental-questions-over-lng-hub-20090416-a82g.html>*

### **Groynes to blame (Western Australia, Australia)**

*15 April 2009, Busselton Dunsborough Mail*

A health Department report on the latest air monitoring results from Port Geographe will be available at the end of the month. The Minister for Disability Services Simon O'Brien revealed this in Parliament while responding to questions from South West Labor MLC Adele Farina. It was also stated that the design of the harbour entrance to Port Geographe had had a detrimental impact on the accumulation of seagrass on the beach adjacent to the entrance.

In response to a question by Ms Farina that hydrogen sulphide levels were recorded at residents' houses that exceeded levels set by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Mr O'Brien said the Department of Health had been reviewing the latest air monitoring results from Port Geographe and a report would be available at the end of April.

In answer to other questions Environment Minister Donna Faragher said the primary issue was the alignment of Wonnerup Beach and the accumulation of seagrass on the beach adjacent to the harbour entrance, which was detrimentally impacted by its design. The Department for Planning and Infrastructure was undertaking a study of seagrass movement within Geographe Bay and the outcome of the study would inform considerations for the future modifications of the harbour entrance.

*Full story and source: <http://busselton.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/groynes-to-blame/1487221.aspx?storypage=0>*

### **Fiji's pristine beauty threatened by severe pollution (Suva, Fiji)**

*12 April 2009, 3news.co.nz*

The global economy and the political unrest in Fiji have both dealt blows to the island nation's tourism industry. However, there is another problem just beneath the surface. Locals say some popular tourist spots along the Coral Coast are swimming in wastewater and the evidence has been caught by a 3 News camera.

Conservation groups say the draw card spot is overrun with seaweed, algal bloom and dead coral as sewage seeps through the sandy soils from the village next door. The village is working with a Christchurch company to build eco-friendly wastewater trenches.

It is a pilot project which organisers hope will be picked up by other villages along the coast. Locals say they will then look to resorts to clean up as well. A marine biologist advising on the project has been testing water outside resorts.  
*Full story and source:* <http://www.3news.co.nz/News/InternationalNews/Fijis-pristine-beauty-threatened-by-severe-pollution/tabid/417/articleID/99405/cat/61/Default.aspx>

### **Sewage pollutes corals, seagrass (Honiara, Solomon Islands)**

*13 April 2009, Solomon Star*

The continued discharge of untreated sewage into the coastal lines and streams is responsible for the deterioration of the coral reefs, a Marine researcher said. John Fairfax, an Australian Researcher said in Solomon Islands this problem is now evident. He said in Honiara and parts of the country such as Auki and in the Western Province, sewage disposal is an issue which the government must seek to resolve and address.

Since the 1980s Mr Fairfax had been visiting the country to monitor and study the coral reef ecosystems. He said for coral reefs to thrive, they must grow in clean shallow water with a low density of anthropogenic nutrients, a stable density of salt, moderate temperature and bright sunshine. He pointed out evidence of this is the number of algae that grew rapidly and completely covered the coral and seagrass, resulting in their death.

Scientists said that coral reefs are natural habitats for more than 25 percent of marine life and fish output from the reefs accounts for 12 percent of the global fish catch. They are also important because they help protect the coastline, minimize beach erosion caused by big waves and tsunamis, and nurture coastal fishery resources, he said.

*Full story and source:*

[http://solomonstarnews.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=8220&Itemid=26&change=71&changeown=78](http://solomonstarnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8220&Itemid=26&change=71&changeown=78)

### **DEP Encourages Boaters to Safeguard Florida's Seagrasses (Crawfordville, FL, USA)**

*02 April 2009, Wakulla.com*

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Northwest District is working to protect Florida's important seagrass communities through successful restoration and education efforts.

As more boaters prepare to enter the warmer spring waters DEP is reminding both commercial and recreational boaters their role in protecting our seagrasses, and the vital role these plants play in a healthy ecosystem. While strengthened environmental regulations are effectively addressing the environmental impacts to our marine environments, large areas of seagrass beds are lost each year due to prop scaring and accidental groundings.

"Even with all the success of our restoration program, there is no solution better than prevention," said Dick Fancher, Director of the DEP's Northwest District. "It is much more cost effective to prevent the damage to our seagrass beds than to restore them." Seagrasses are protected by Florida Statute and boaters can face federal and state fines as well as costs associated with restoration efforts for damaging the vegetation.

*Full story and source:*

[http://www.wakulla.com/Wakulla\\_Outdoors/FWC\\_General\\_News/DEP\\_Encourages\\_Boaters\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Florida%27s\\_Seagrasses\\_200904027551/](http://www.wakulla.com/Wakulla_Outdoors/FWC_General_News/DEP_Encourages_Boaters_to_Safeguard_Florida%27s_Seagrasses_200904027551/)

## **CONFERENCES**

### **Queensland Coastal Conference 2009: Waves of Change (Gold Coast 12-15 May, 2009)**

Registration for the Queensland Coastal Conference 2009 "Waves of Change" has now opened. 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>

*More information:* <http://www.iceaustralia.com/qldcoast09/index.html>

## **SEAGRASS-WATCH WORKSHOPS 2009**

### **Asia**

Singapore (Level 1 & Level 2), May 01-03 (Registration closed)

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

Bali (Level 1), May 09-10 (Registration closes 22nd April 2009)

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

## GALLERY

### **Mackay Whitsunday (Qld, Australia): 04 - 09 April 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Seagrass-Watch HQ visited the region to conduct Reef Rescue MMP at 6 sites and also conduct Seagrass-Watch monitoring at a number of other locations. Several volunteers participate in the Field Day on the intertidal sand/mud flats adjacent to Cannonvale, where sites are dominated by *Halodule uninervis* and *Zostera capricorni* (*Halophila spinulosa* was also found at the beginning of PI2 transect 3. A large baler shell was also spotted). The estuarine habitats at Sarina were monitored the following and although dominated by *Zostera capricorni*, the meadow was not looking the best with declines in overall abundance. Sites at Hamilton Island had similarly declined and appears a consequence of erosion, possibly from TC Hamish which impacted the region earlier this year. Nevertheless, seagrass abundance appeared similar to previous years at Midge Point and Hydeaway Bay.

### **Central Qld (Australia): 05 - 09 April 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

### **Townsville (Qld, Australia): 09 April 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

This monitoring event had potential to be interesting as it followed unusually high rainfall from Nov - Feb, with significant storms and storm surges from December - Feb. The whole reef flat area was coated with a thin but all pervasive layer of mud. There was no *Halophila ovalis* or *Thalassia hemprichii* found along the transects. As usual, *Cymodocea serrulata* dominated, with similar or somewhat lower levels than usual of *Halodule uninervis*. Algal masses and mounds were virtually absent.

## 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.