



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

22 October 2010

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NEWS

Experts probe latest dugong death (Cairns, QLD, Australia)

11 October 2010, by Kristy Sexton-McGrath and Flora Zigterman, ABC Online

The adult dugong carcass was found at Yorkey's Knob, in the northern suburbs of Cairns on Sunday. Authorities are investigating the death of another dugong found on a Cairns beach in far north Queensland. The Department of Environment Resource Management is investigating the discovery. Five dugongs have been found dead in illegal fishing nets off the coast of Cairns since March.

Meanwhile, researchers say climate change is having an impact on dugong and turtle numbers in the state's far north. James Cook University researcher Dr Mariana Fuentes says climate change, fishing, onshore development and pollution are all contributing to a decline in numbers. But she says climate change is having the greatest impact. "If we think in terms of climate change being a depleted population of turtles and dugongs, [it] is only going to lower the capacity of turtles and dugongs in the future, because when you are depleted you are more vulnerable to additional stresses such as climate change," she said.

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

Related stories: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/11/04/3057197.htm>
http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2010/11/04/133691_local-news.html
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/11/03/3056099.htm>

Global Experiment Will Shed Light on Biodiversity in Seagrass (USA)

21 October 2010, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), College of William and Mary

Newswise — Professor Emmett Duffy of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science has received a 3-year, \$728,000 grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation to establish a global experimental network for studying how nutrient pollution and changes in biodiversity impact seagrass beds. The ultimate goal of the international research project is to generate knowledge that will help improve the computer models and management strategies that are increasingly used to predict and manage change in the world's coastal zones.

Research at VIMS and elsewhere shows that seagrasses play a key role in the health and vitality of coastal ecosystems, providing a home for important fish and shellfish species, limiting erosion, soaking up nutrients, and helping to improve water clarity. Scientists estimate the value of these "ecosystem services" in the trillions of dollars per year. The research also shows that seagrasses are experiencing a troubling decline in most coastal ecosystems around the world.

Duffy, Loretta and Lewis Glucksman Professor of Marine Science at VIMS, says the new project builds on a series of small-scale seagrass experiments that he has conducted at VIMS during the last decade with graduate students and technicians in his Marine Biodiversity Lab.

Full story and source: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/global-experiment-will-shed-light-on-biodiversity-in-seagrass>

Task force to suggest measures for Dugong conservation (New Delhi, India)

15 October 2010, IBN Live

Country's endangered 'mermaids', zoologically called Sirenoid or *Dugong dugong*, are finally getting attention with the Environment ministry setting up a task force to chalk out steps for their conservation. The nine-member task force would develop a national conservation strategy and action plan for dugongs and their habitats in the country in the next six months to be submitted to the ministry for implementation, a statement from the ministry said here.

Perfect non-violent underwater giants, dugongs' habitat is gradually under threat due to pollution and destruction of coral reefs. Also known as seacow, these mammals also surf on waters every 15 minutes like Gangetic Dolphins and whales, for breathing. And, since excessive unregulated mechanised fishing is also taking a toll on them, the panel has been asked to examine issues relating to fishermen-dugongs conservation interface and recommend appropriate short-term and long-term solutions. "It would also recommend appropriate methodology and institutional framework for monitoring the status of the animal with their habitats in the country as well as in the South Asia sub-region," says the statement.

Besides, the panel which will be advised by international expert on dugongs, HS Das, is also entrusted with the task of recommending appropriate methodology and institutional framework to recover the dugongs and their habitats in the country. Apart from officials from ministry, the panel members include experts from Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Reefwatch Marine Conservation and Wildlife Institute of India and Chief Wildlife Wardens of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andaman and Nicobar on whose coastal grasslands the marine mammal lives.

Full story and source: <http://ibnlive.in.com/generalnewsfeed/news/task-force-to-suggest-measures-for-dugong-conservation/417826.html>

McLeod warns on marina 'damage' (QLD, Australia)

16th October 2010, by Arthur Gorrie, Gympie Times

Joe McLeod has claimed the proposed Fraser Coast Marina at Tin Can Bay poses significant environmental and heritage threats to the Great Sandy region. Mr McLeod, a former fisherman and industry advocate, says dredging for the proposal would greatly damage environmentally vital seagrass beds and run the risk of unleashing "located away pathogens and fungi".

The claims are made in Mr McLeod's formal submission to the marina proponent, the Seymour Group, as part of the process of having the project assessed under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. He said the most recent previous dredging operation in the Snapper Creek area was for expansion of the existing

Snapper Creek boat harbour about two years ago. "The areas at Carlo, Wabbies Bay, Tarwin Bay and also off the western land mass of Boronia on the Wide Bay Military training Area side had a total collapse of seagrass a few months after the dredging stopped. "To date there is no recovery of seagrass on the Carlo Creek, Wabbies Bay and Tarwin Bay, (but) there is some new seagrass growth (on the military training area side)," he said. "The recovery could start this spring and take years, but given that there are two proposed new large marina complexes and boat harbour maintenance dredging, it does not look good for the Tin Can Inlet, Ramsar wetland, the seagrass area or the protected species and fisheries habitat that depend on this area.

He was also critical of what he called inadequate sand bund walls to contain dredge material and the possibility of an acid run-off effect from exposed clay likely to be dug up from the creek bed during dredging. He said torpidity from dredging could spread easily as far as the Wide Bay Bar.

Full story and source: <http://www.gympietimes.com.au/story/2010/10/16/mcleod-warns-on-marina-damage-joe-fraser-coast/>

Task force to suggest measures for Dugong conservation (New Delhi, India)

15 October 2010, The Times of India

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Full story and source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Task-force-to-suggest-measures-for-Dugong-conservation/articleshow/6755734.cms>

Turtle, Dugongs 'at risk due to climate change' (Washington, USA)

09 October 2010, oneindia news

Scientists have revealed that the northern Great Barrier Reef (GBR) and Torres Strait region, is under immense pressure due to climate change from human actions such as fishing, hunting, onshore development and pollution. "Depletion of turtle and dugong numbers increases their vulnerability to other threats and lowers their ability to cope with climate change," said Mariana Fuentes of the James Cook University.

Fuentes said that turtles in particular are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which include decreases in hatching success, loss of nesting areas and overheated beaches, which will decrease the turtles' reproductive output and may significantly alter the sex ratio of their offspring. Fuentes' research into the green, hawksbill and flatback turtles and well as dugongs in the northern GBR and Torres Strait is seeking to establish priorities for the management of marine megafauna to increase their resilience to climate change.

The loss of these species would have a huge impact on the northern Australian marine environment and on indigenous communities, she warned. The results of the research were presented at the Academy of Science's Shine Dome. (ANI)

Full story and source: <http://news.oneindia.in/2010/10/09/turtledugongs-at-risk-due-to-climatechange.html>

Related stories: <http://www.sciencealert.com.au/news/20100810-21406.html>

Anger simmers over Okinawa base burden (Henoko, Okinawa, Japan)

7 October 2010, by Philippa Fogarty, BBC News

The critically endangered dugongs feed on seagrasses that grow in the waters around Henoko. Japan and the US want to move Futenma airbase from central Okinawa to the tiny village of Henoko - but local residents are doing everything they can to thwart the plan.

Local residents began protesting in 1997, a year after a proposal emerged to close Futenma airbase and replace it with a new offshore facility in Henoko. Everyone agrees that closing Futenma airbase is a good idea. Donald Rumsfeld, flying over Futenma in 2003, is said to have called it the "world's most dangerous base". Eight thousand US marines would move to Guam, Futenma would be closed and the land returned. A replacement facility would be built in Henoko. The current plan is for land to be reclaimed off Camp Schwab to support either one or two 2km-runways. On paper, it makes sense. But many residents oppose the plan.

Environmentalists say the proposed landfill would harm rare marine life - turtles, coral - in the area. They say it will directly affect the last known feeding ground of the Okinawa dugong. Taro Hosokawa of the Dugong Network Okinawa says the whole area should be given special protection. "Of course the base will have an effect," he says, citing problems like aircraft noise, pollution and damage to sea grasses caused by the landfill. "Looking at the current situation, even if they don't make the base, the Okinawa dugong will become extinct. But if they build the base, it will happen faster."

Full story and source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11404406>

Related stories: <http://www.stripes.com/news/joint-futenma-report-fails-to-settle-runway-plan-1.116593>

Dugong heaven: at last, a sanctuary to live, play and breed (QLD, Australia)

7 October 2010, by Daniel Bateman, The Cairns Post

The world's largest population of dugongs may soon be able to live a little bit longer as a new survey could see a 2744km sanctuary extended. James Cook University has received more than \$100,000 in federal funding to survey the waters of the Torres Strait to help authorities evaluate the potential of extending the boundaries of the 25-year-old dugong sanctuary.

Dugong hunting is banned in a large area of western Torres Strait, which was set aside as a 2744km sanctuary in 1985. Scientists from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences will conduct an aerial survey of the area to count dugong numbers and establish their range, with locals and latest data suggesting the population is over-harvested. JCU researcher Mark Hamann said aerial surveys had been carried out for several years.

Full story and source: http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2010/10/07/129895_local-news.html

Bob fights to save Norman Point (QLD, Australia)

6th October 2010, The Gympie Times

Bob Irwin founder of Australia Zoo, is calling on all Australians to lend their voice and help protect Tin Can Bay's vitally important inhabitants. Renowned wildlife conservationist and founder of Australia Zoo Bob Irwin has joined the fight against a large marina proposed for Norman Point, Tin Can Bay.

Mr Irwin has joined the fight against a large marina proposed for Norman Point and is campaigning to create the groundswell urgently needed to stop it from going ahead. A final decision could be made as early as November and if Environment Minister Tony Burke approved the development, it would put an end to one of the few outstanding ecosystems left on the east coast of Australia, Mr Irwin said.

Since 2004, the Coolooloa Coast community has banded together in the fight against developers the Seymour Group and the battle has now escalated to a federal issue because of the potential impact on threatened and migratory species. Tin Can Bay provides habitat and breeding grounds for many species including threatened Indo Pacific humpback dolphins, and endangered dugongs and turtles.

Full story and source: <http://www.gympietimes.com.au/story/2010/10/06/bob-irwin-joins-fight-save-norman-point/>

Sarasota Bay bouncing back (Florida, USA)

25 September 2010, by Timothy R. Wolfrum, Bradenton.com

MANATEE — As the dumping of wastewater into Sarasota Bay has slowed to a trickle, the bay and its inhabitants have steadily bounced back to health, according to an environmental group's report. The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program study, "State of the Bay 2010: Celebrating Paradise, Staying the Course," says nitrogen pollution into the bay has been reduced 64 percent since 1988. That has spurred the growth of seagrass, up 24 percent since 1950, and the return of scallops, a key barometer of water quality.

The report, presented Friday evening at the Powel Crosley estate, is required every three years from the estuary program, which was created by Manatee and Sarasota governments as well as state and federal departments in 1989 in an effort to reclaim the environmental integrity of the bay. It is one of 28 estuary programs across the country. Members of the estuary program policy board celebrated the bay's turnaround Friday and the governmental cooperation that made it happen.

Full story and source: <http://www.bradenton.com/2010/09/25/2604358/sarasota-bay-bouncing-back.html>

Unsound report card (Perth, WA, Australia)

24 September 2010, City of Joondalup

Key government departments responsible for managing the health of Cockburn Sound came under fire this week after a new report revealed serious flaws in monitoring and management practices have masked the extent of decline of the marine ecosystem. The news has created outrage and prompted claims the community has been misled over the state of the Sound and the pressure it is under from increasing industrial, urban and recreational use.

Auditor General Colin Murphy tabled a report in Parliament on Wednesday that found "errors and inconsistencies" in reporting on the health of the marine environment meant the evidence of decline in seagrass health and water quality in parts of the Sound had not been highlighted. The audit also found reference sites in Warnbro Sound, used to compare the seagrass health in Cockburn Sound, had declined, leading to a lowering of standards for determining healthy seagrass. However, that lowering of standards had not been reported.

Management authorities responsible for the Sound are the Cockburn Sound Management Council (CSMC), set up in 2000 in response to community concerns, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the Environmental Protection Authority. CSMC chairwoman Kateryna Longley said the findings were useful and was pleased the audit confirmed the CSMC's key role in protecting Cockburn Sound.

Full story and source: <http://www.inmycommunity.com.au/news-and-views/local-news/Unsound-report-card/7570189/>

Bird poop just may restore seagrass bed (Florida, USA)

21 September 2010, by Tania Valdemorokey, Biscayne Times

Key Biscayne will have to restore some seagrass beds -- with the help of some visiting sea birds -- before it can add sand to its eroded beaches. Key Biscayne leaders are working on a deal with Biscayne National Park to finish a seagrass restoration project -- an important precursor to the village's long awaited beach restoration.

Key Biscayne is eager to add 75,000 cubic yards of sand eight years after its last major beach renourishment project. To make things worse, Hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita in 2004 and 2005 swept away a lot of sand and changed the beach-going experience for many locals. And before Key Biscayne can get the permits to renourish its beaches -- from the southern end of Crandon Park to the northern edge of Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park -- it needs to restore 1.33 acres of seagrass beds.

To date, Key Biscayne has restored 1.01 acres of seagrass, said Anne McCarthy, a consultant from CSA International, who is working on the village's seagrass restoration project. "It only has 0.32 acres to finish." With nearby seagrass areas already mitigated, Key Biscayne is hoping to fulfill the rest of its obligations at Biscayne National Park east of Homestead.

Full story and source: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/09/21/1835846/bird-poop-just-may-restore-seagrass.html>

Environmental groups hope to restore Gulf shorelines (Alabama, USA)

15 September 2010, Fox10tv

Four environmental groups hope to restore the Gulf of Mexico and Mobile Bay to pre-spill condition and beyond. They kicked off a new project aimed at restoring oyster reefs and seagrass one mile at a time.

The 100/1000 plan is a collaboration between the Mobile Bay Keeper, The Nature Conservancy, Alabama Coastal Foundation and the National Ocean Association. Its goal is to plant 100 miles of oyster reef and 1,000 miles of sea grass. Environmentalist said they'll restore 20 miles per year. They expect it to take three to five years.

"We need people to get involved, and volunteer. Ask their local leaders to support this project," Casi Callaway with Mobile BayKeeper said. It's a project Nelson said will keep the bay bountiful, and maintain his way of life. The plan will cover 53 miles of beach and 600 miles of tidal shoreline in Alabama.

Full story and source: http://www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/gulf_oil_spill/groups-hope-to-restore-gulf-shorelines

Mooring, marker plan to be revised (Miami, FL, USA)

05 September 2010, by Susan Cocking, Miami Herald

After complaints from irate boaters, officials will draft a new plan on the placement of mooring and marker buoys for Biscayne National Park waters. Biscayne National Park superintendent Mark Lewis announced the park will go back to the drawing board on a controversial mooring and marker buoy plan for park waters.

In a statement e-mailed Thursday, Lewis wrote that the park will prepare a new draft plan for placing mooring buoys and informational and navigational markers and release it for public comment in a few months. The announcement came after irate boaters barraged Lewis with e-mails opposing the preferred alternative, known as Plan B, which they saw as an attempt to restrict visitor access to the popular marine park.

Lewis had repeatedly insisted that the plan was not intended to close visitor access to Sands Cut and that it still would allow anchoring at most of the area around Elliott Key. He also reiterated it would have no impact on the annual Columbus Day weekend festivities, where sailboats race and powerboaters hang out and party. Lewis said the goal was to improve visitor safety and enjoyment, as well as protect marine resources such as seagrass beds and coral reefs. But Lewis acknowledged Thursday that there were important features of the plan that the park did not make clear enough, and that everyone would be better served by additional public discussion.

Full story and source: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/09/05/1809385/mooring-marker-plan-to-be-revised.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine

Previous issues of the magazine, Seagrass-Watch News: The official magazine of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program are available online at: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

CONFERENCES

World Seagrass Conference & ISBW9 (Thailand, November 2010)

A World Seagrass Conference (WSC) and the 9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) will take place in southern Thailand in November, 2010. Both the WSC and ISBW9 will be hosted by Prince of Songkla University, Southern Thailand. *Please visit the conference & workshop web site for further details:* <http://www.sc.psu.ac.th/seagrass/>

GALLERY

Far North Qld (Australia): 21 - 22 September 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Sep_10.html

Green Island: 21 Sep 2010

Yule Point: 22 Sep 2010

Broome (WA, Australia): 10 - 12 September 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Sep_10.html

Seagrass-Watch HQ was back in Broome to conduct both Level 1 (basic) and Level 2 (refresher) workshops. The Demco site, was the field event that kicked off the training workshops.

Mer Island (Qld, Australia): 07 - 09 September 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Sep_10.html

MR1, 2 and 3 were all monitored in early September. At all three sites percent cover was slightly down but canopy heights of the meadows were taller than that recorded in July. Algal cover and epiphyte cover were also down from the previous monitoring period.

Goold Island (Cardwell, Australia): 06 September 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Sep_10.html

The Cardwell rangers did their annual monitoring of Goold on September 6. The meadow was possibly barer than it was last year and the sediments even muddier. Since 2008 there has been a dramatic decline in the seagrass cover at this site.

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch Magazine <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

Seagrass-Watch Shop <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html>

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Giveaways <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html#GIVE1>

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