



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

28 July 2010

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NEWS

Fears dredging plans threaten dugong (Australia)

27 July 2010, ABC Online

The Capricorn Conservation Council says it is still hopeful that the Federal Government will veto an \$800 million dredging project planned for the Gladstone Harbour in central Queensland.

Up to 43 million cubic metres of material could be dredged from the harbour under the Western Basin Dredging and Disposal Project. The Gladstone Ports Corporation's Leo Zussino acknowledges that it will impact on dugong habitat but says the project is needed to prepare the harbour for the LNG industry.

The State Government has imposed environmental conditions but Michael McCabe from the Capricorn Conservation Council says they do not go far enough. "These massive tankers will just dominate the entire harbour and it'll become extremely difficult for sensitive marine life like dugongs to even sustain their breeding and feeding," he said. The

project is dependent on federal approval and the environment department says a decision is unlikely before the election.

Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/27/2965026.htm>

More rangers needed to stop dugong deaths (Australia)

22 July 2010, ABC Online

The State Opposition says more rangers are needed in north Queensland to help cut the number of dugong deaths.

A commercial fisher reported seeing four dead dugongs near Townsville to authorities last week. Several more deaths were recorded in the state's far north earlier in the year. Authorities say it is unclear who killed the mammals, but it appears those responsible tried to conceal the deaths. Opposition environment spokesman Greg Elmes says the region's waterways need better policing.

Meanwhile, the dugong deaths have angered the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA), saying it gives the industry a bad name. QSIA president Michael Gardiner says it has the ability to jeopardise the livelihood of fishermen along the north Queensland coast. He also says strong action is needed against those responsible.

Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/22/2961034.htm?section=justin>

Related article: <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201007/s2960897.htm>

Seagrass reference group set up for Port Geographe

21 July 2010, Busselton Dunsborough Mail

Department of Transport project manager James Holder said the Port Geographe Sediment and Seagrass Reference Group's key role would be to identify local issues relevant to the development and testing of proposed solutions in the coming months. He said the intention was that the group would make recommendations which form part of a proposal to government representing the interests of all stakeholders.

In May scientists from The University of Western Australia (UWA) recommended further testing of proposed groyne reconfigurations at Port Geographe. The report was commissioned by Transport and the Shire of Busselton to provide an insight into the behaviour of seagrass in the larger Geographe Bay area and to assist in finding effective management solutions for Port Geographe. UWA scientists have now begun testing modifications to the existing coastal structures using sophisticated computer modelling.

Mr Holder said a special selection process had been established to ensure the group's membership represented the broad spectrum of coastal interests, issues and concerns about the Port Geographe development. Approximately 20 people will be selected to work cooperatively with the existing technical project team (established in 2008) to provide feedback on the testing of possible solutions as the modelling progresses, Mr Holder said. The reference group is expected to operate for a number of months after which time the results, costings and recommendations will be reported to government for consideration.

Full story and source: <http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/seagrass-reference-group-set-up-for-port-geographe/1891514.aspx>

Investigations, compliance training tackle illegal poaching of dugong (Australia)

18 July 2010, Sail world

Investigations and a new compliance training program are being combined in a new approach to tackle illegal poaching of dugong in the far north area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The move follows two separate incidents - a net and dugongs found by an Australian Navy vessel en route to Cairns for ANZAC Day this year, and another net found in the region by Traditional Owners soon after.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman Russell Reichelt said this combination of investigative and educational avenues would help ensure all bases were covered in addressing this issue.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will also look at further options to boost compliance in the area, including the possibility of involving Traditional Owners in boat patrols carried out in the Marine Park. Melissa George from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee said the training was welcomed by Traditional Owners.

Full story and source: <http://www.sail-world.com/Australia/Investigations,-compliance-training-tackle-illegal-poaching-of-dugong/72157>

Longer ship channel, shorter jetty for Inpex (Australia)

15 July 2010, ABC Online

Japanese company Inpex has decided to dredge a longer shipping channel in Darwin Harbour so it does not restrict access to popular fishing creeks. Recreational fisherman have been concerned the shipping jetty for Inpex's planned \$12 billion gas processing plant would stop them getting access to the Catalina creeks.

Releasing its environmental impact statement today, Inpex says it has now reduced the planned length of the jetty from 3.5 kilometres to 500 metres so the creeks are not blocked. But it will now have to dredge a longer, seven kilometre shipping channel to Blaydin Point.

The company says sediment from the dredging could kill some mangroves but it does not think seagrass in which dugongs feed will be affected.

Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/15/2954487.htm?section=business>

Aransas County seeks Little Bay seagrass (USA)

11 July 2010, Corpus Christi Caller Times

During a Tuesday discussion of what is killing seagrass in Little Bay, Aransas County Judge Burt Mills noted, "We are our own worst enemy when it comes to messing with Mother Nature." Seagrass, which provides a habitat for fish, crabs, birds and other marine life, previously were abundant in Little Bay, but died off in 2005. It is a top priority among all of the county's governmental agencies to bring seagrass back to the bay, considered one of the county's most treasured resources.

Aransas County, the city of Rockport and the Aransas County Navigation District each has at least one project in the works to address various environmental problems. But a solution — installing a culvert from Rockport Harbor to the south end of Little Bay, where prevailing winds would circulate water through an existing channel — hasn't gotten traction because of the cost.

Lamar Story, navigation district vice chairman, said at Tuesday's joint meeting the \$3 million estimated cost is just too much for the district to take on alone. The district has a \$2 million annual budget.

Full story and source: <http://www.caller.com/news/2010/jul/10/aransas-county-seeks-little-bay-seagrass/>

Study reveals no 'single' Little Bay solution (USA)

09 July 2010, Rockport Pilot

Elected representatives from the City of Rockport, Aransas County, the Aransas County Navigation District (ACND), and the Town of Fulton gathered at Rockport City Hall Tuesday, July 6 to hear an assessment of Little Bay water and sediment quality, and how that relates to the decline in seagrasses in Little Bay. The two-year study was conducted by the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in coordination with the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, with funding by local governmental entities. The original study was to cover a period of one year, but it was extended over a two-year period at no additional cost. The period studied was May 2008 to June 2010.

The NEER's Dr. Kenneth Dunton and doctoral candidate Christopher Wilson made the presentation which was followed by a brief discussion. Measurements and observations made in the study include nutrients, isotopic analysis, characterizing the UV light environment, water column parameters, and existing seagrass characterization.

Full story and source: <http://www.rockportpilot.com/articles/2010/07/09/news/doc4c373beacc1c9517664616.txt>

Coast Guard Patrols Florida Waters for Oil (USA)

05 July 2010, Voice of America

The U.S. state of Florida has 1300 kilometers of beaches, all of which officials fear are at risk from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Our correspondent reports that military and wildlife officials are being deployed across the state, scouring for signs of oil.

The work of patrolling Florida's waters for oil begins in the skies. Three times a day, crews take off from the Coast Guard station in Clearwater to search for oil. Crews visually scan for ribbons and sheets of oil. They also use radar to help spot oil just below the water's surface.

Oil has already come ashore at Pensacola Beach. Clean-up crews worked over the July 4th holiday weekend, usually a time when tourists go to the beach. Experts say cleaning a beach is relatively easy. The job would be tougher in fragile wetlands, like in Key Largo. Wildlife officials routinely patrol these shallow waters, a habitat for many fish and shellfish. Experts fear the oil could destroy vegetation and endanger the entire food chain. National park ranger Dan Kiger says oil poses a special risk to mangroves and sea grass, for example.

So far, no oil from the Deepwater Horizon leak has been found near the Florida Keys. Experts say the risk is low, in part because weather systems have kept the oil away. While clean-up continues in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, officials in Florida are watching to guard against oil damage here as well.

Full story and source: <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Coast-Guard-Patrols-Florida-Waters-for-Oil--97821824.html>

Shell-tered existence (South Africa)

15 July 2010, Citizen

Besides being an indulgent destination, the Seychelles is also home to the Hawksbill Turtle and the Green Turtle, both endangered species.

Until as recently as five years ago it was still legal to eat Green Turtle in the Seychelles, explains Desroches Island Resort conservation officer Lisa Thompson, but people are now becoming more aware of the need to preserve the creatures. As Thompson explains, Desroches Island is a key site in the Seychelles because of the abundance of seagrass on its coastlines.

The fact that Desroches is a sanctuary for the Green and Hawkbill Turtles makes spotting them while you're lazing on the beach or snorkelling highly likely. And that in itself warrants a visit to the island.

Full story and source: http://www.citizen.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81869&catid=60:lifestyle&Itemid=78

Underwater grasses show improvement (USA)

28 June 2010, Delmarva Daily Times

In early June, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Coastal Bays Program, the Virginia Institute of Marine Scientists and the National Park Service released a study showing underwater seagrass abundance in Maryland and Virginia's coastal bays increased by 25 percent last year. This increase, from 10,916 acres in 2008 to 13,628 acres in 2009, shows that the bays continue to recover from a dramatic loss suffered in 2005. The goal, developed by the Maryland Coastal Bay's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, is 20,070 acres of seagrass -- we've still got a long way to go.

Poor water quality is the biggest threat to seagrass recovery. Nutrient pollution fuels algae and seaweed blooms in the water which can block light to seagrass beds. Distribution of seagrasses in the northern bays is limited, presumably due to poorer water quality conditions. Marylanders can take simple actions to help protect water quality in coastal bays and seagrasses.

The Coastal Bays Nutrient Reduction Action Strategy recommends common sense approaches to nutrient reductions, such as minimal use of lawn fertilizers; following recommended farming practices; avoiding seagrass beds when boating; and using good boating practices that keep pollutants out of the water. Homeowners can have a particularly positive impact when they pump their septic tanks regularly, replace lawns with trees and native plants, build rain gardens, install rain barrels, diligently clean up pet waste and limit impervious surfaces on their property.

For simple tips for boaters, homeowners and visitors who want to help keep the seagrass growing, contact the Maryland Coastal Bays Program at mcbp@mdcoastalbays.org or visit www.mdcoastalbays.org.

Full story and source: <http://www.delmarvanow.com/article/20100628/OPINION01/6280334>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine: (Issue 41)- NOW ONLINE

The latest edition of Seagrass-Watch News: *The official magazine of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program* is available online at : <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2010

Australia

Broome, WA, September 10-12 2010

For more information: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop10>

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. The region features fascinating seagrass ecosystems; Phuket is a world-renowned diving area and Trang has Thailand's largest seagrass meadows. Both the WSC and ISBW9 will be hosted by Prince of Songkla University, Southern Thailand.

World Seagrass Conference (WSC) (Phuket, 21–25 November, 2010)

Open to all and will include invited plenary lectures and oral and poster presentations

9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) (Trang, 27–30 November, 2010)

ISBW9 will follow the WSC and consist of a smaller group of participants, including both international seagrass experts and regional scientists and practitioners, to address problems of seagrass conservation and restoration, which so far are little known across Southeast Asia and South Asia.

Please visit the conference & workshop web site for further details: <http://www.sc.psu.ac.th/seagrass/>

Important Dates for the WSC and ISBW9

15 August 2010	Notification of Abstract Acceptance for Oral or Poster
30 August 2010	Registration closes
15 September 2010	Final Programme Announcement
21-25 November 2010	WSC in Phuket, SouthernThailand
27-30 November 2010	ISBW-9 in Trang, SouthernThailand

PUBLICATIONS:

Integrating and Applying Science: A handbook for effective coastal ecosystem assessment

B.J. Longstaff, T.J.B. Carruthers, W.C. Dennison, T.R. Lookingbill, J.M. Hawkey, J.E. Thomas, E.C. Wicks, J. Woerner

Vast areas of the globe's coastal zone have experienced significant declines in ecosystem health. Deteriorating water quality, loss and alteration of vital habitats, and reduced populations of fish and shellfish are some of the major changes recorded. Establishing and running an effective assessment program is a complex process that necessitates strategic collaboration and partnerships between many individuals and agencies. This book was written to make the process of running a coastal assessment program easier and the outcomes more effective. It provides a step-by-step approach from data collection and information management to synthesis and application and draws on the knowledge of a variety of coastal scientists and managers.

Includes Seagrass-Watch as a case study (Chapter 11, page 185)

http://ian.umces.edu/press/books/publication/259/integrating_and_applying_science_a_handbook_for_effective_coastal_ecosystem_assessment_2010-05-10/

SOS Files: A Journey to Sungai Pulai

The 156-page species handbook features the flora and fauna (mainly marine) in Sungai Pulai and is the first comprehensive publication from Save Our Seahorses (SOS). This handbook was partially funded by the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). The authors are Choo Chee Kuang, Serina Rahman and Khor Hui Min. The design was done by Ms Chin Pik Wun. One thousand copies were printed and are currently available at the SOS research centre and the Malaysian Nature Society bookstore. Priced at RM29 each.

For more information contact: saveourseahorses@yahoo.com

SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

Seagrass: Pastures of the sea <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vgswj20> or

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

Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important (*over 5,000 views to date*)

GALLERY

Mer Island (Torres Strait, Qld, Australia) 20 - 22 July 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Broome (WA, Australia): 14 - 16 July 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Singapore: 16 - 17 July 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Far North Qld (Australia): 09 - 12 July 2010<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

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>

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.