



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

**14 January 2011**

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*Please note: links to sources were active on date of publication. Some sources remove links periodically.*

## NEWS

### **Floods threaten Great Barrier Reef, La Niña to blame (USA)**

*12 January 2011, CNN International*

Floods have devastated the landscape of the state of Queensland, Australia, but they also present a high risk to the Great Barrier Reef. Stretching over 2,300 kilometers (1,430 miles) along the northeast coast of Australia, large parts of the southern Great Barrier Reef are "flooded" with fresh water. Currently the biggest plumes of fresh water reach about 200 kilometers (124 miles) north from the mouths of the Fitzroy and Burnett Rivers, and stretch around 70 kilometers (43 miles) off the coast.

"These are extraordinary events. The whole of the inner-shore reef lagoon filled with river water," says Jon Brodie, Principle Researcher for the James Cook University's Australian Center for Tropical Freshwater Research. Brodie and his team regularly monitor the reefs and are immersed in studying the impact of the flood waters. The mix of nutrients, sediment and pesticides from agricultural run-off, plus currently unknown amounts of trace metals from flooded mines, will likely have an immediately devastating impact on corals and seagrasses, says Brodie.

The immediate death of corals and seagrass is expected, which could then have a devastating affect on other marine creatures like dugongs that feed on seagrass. Bigger fishes can swim away from the deluge of fresh water, but smaller coral reef fish may suffer the same fate as the corals they live around, says Brodie. While corals can recover from "bleaching", it's a slow process. Other unwanted long term effects can be algae blooms which can upset the reef ecosystems.

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

*Related articles: [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=2&objectid=10699420](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10699420)*

## **Minor area feels harm (Queensland, Australia)**

12 January 2011, *The morning bulletin*

The floodwaters flowing from the Fitzroy River are currently affecting only a small area of the reef compared to the size of the Great Barrier Reef as a whole, says Mary Carroll. The chief executive of Capricorn Tourism and Economic Development yesterday said the coral reefs around the Keppel Islands had experienced freshwater outflows from the Fitzroy River numerous times.

She said a team from James Cook University's Australian Centre for Tropical Freshwater Research was performing a water quality monitoring program in the Fitzroy and Burnett river regions as part of the \$10.5 million Reef Rescue Marine Monitoring Program. The team assesses levels of nutrients, sediments, pesticides and salinity as well as overall coral health and seagrass beds.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority general manager marine park management Andrew Skeat said that while freshwater influxes could be harmful to corals, seagrasses and other marine habitats, some fish species thrived in the current conditions.

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

## **Great Barrier Reef among the Australian flood victims (Queensland, Australia)**

07 January 2011, *msn.com*

Armed with water samples and historical flood data, Australian researchers are warning that the massive flooding in Queensland State is also impacting a neighbor: the Great Barrier Reef. Already a huge pile of sediment has been dumped by the Burdekin River into waters at the southern end of the massive reef. Besides top soil, that sediment contains pesticides and fertilizers. The combined effect of all that outflow could be dead coral.

"Our work has shown that high levels of nutrients and sediments can reduce coral diversity and increase the cover of seaweeds on inshore reefs," Katharina Fabricius, a researcher at the Australian Institute of Marine Science, told msnbc.com. A team from the institute will be going out to part of the reef next week to check for impacts, she added, noting that the river on average carries more than three million tons of sediments into the reef every year — much of it soil eroded by cattle grazing along the river.

The sediment can also affect seagrass beds, causing some marine life to starve, and can trigger stress events that can lead to coral die-offs. "You get very stressed corals, you get stressed seagrass," Michelle Devlin, a researcher at James Cook University in northern Queensland, told the news agency AFP. She described the mix of water, nutrient-heavy soil and pesticide run-off as a harmful "cocktail" for the corals. Delvin said it was too early to know what impact the flooding would have overall on the 12,600-mile-long Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

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

*Related articles: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/great-barrier-reef-threatened/story-e6frg6nf-1225983250536>*

## **Snake Bight Goes Poll-and-Troll (USA)**

06 January 2011, *Florida Sportsman Magazine*

New regulations expected to protect seagrass, sensitive habitat. The 2011 new year started with new regulations for Snake Bight fishermen. January 1 marked the start of a poll-and-troll zone for all of Snake Bight, south to Tin Can Channel.

"This new protective zone was created to provide enhanced protection of Snake Bight's sensitive aquatic vegetation and wilderness resources, improve the quality of flats fishing, enhance paddling and wildlife viewing opportunities, and expand education on proper shallow-water boating techniques," says Everglades National Park Superintendent Dan Kimball.

"This protective management measure should help prevent new seagrass scars in that area of the bay that take several years to recover and negatively impact the ecology of the bay," said Kimball.

As part of this new program, the park is implementing a monitoring plan to help assess the pole-and-troll zone's effectiveness in protecting seagrass, while enhancing fishing and other recreational experiences. For complete information, visit the National Park Service Web site.

*Full story and source: <http://www.floridasportsman.com/casts/110106/>*

## **SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine: Issue 42 NOW ONLINE**

The latest edition of 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>

# SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2011

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

## SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

**Seagrass: Pastures of the sea** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vqswi2Q> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>  
Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important (12,509 views to date)

## GALLERY

**Chek Jawa (Singapore): 02 January 2011** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Great Keppel Island (Qld, Australia): 04 December 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.