www.seagrasswatch.org



27 June 2012

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Seagrass solution theory for endangered coral reefs

23 June 2012, BBC News South West Wales

Research headed by a Swansea University marine biologist has offered potential solution to endangered coral reefs around the world's oceans. Dr Richard Unsworth's team included scientists from Oxford University and James Cook University in Australia. They found varieties of seagrass which may reduce the acidity of water around reefs, protecting them from erosion.

But now Dr Unsworth believes he has found varieties of seagrass which can photosynthesise carbon dioxide so quickly and efficiently that they actually turn the surrounding water more alkaline.

Related articles: http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/06/24/248-Seagrass-could-help-cut-acidity-level-in-water-surrounding-coral-reefs.html

http://news.bioscholar.com/2012/06/seagrass-could-help-cut-acidity-level-in-water-surrounding-coral-reefs.html

World Oceans Day

World Oceans Day on 8 June celebrates the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a key international agreement which sets out the legal framework within which activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. To mark the day, the Empire State Building in New York City will be lit in white, blue and purple, representing the different layers of the ocean.

Full story: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/reference_files/worldoceansday.htm

UNESCO warning for Great Barrier Reef as coastal industrial development continues (QLD, Australia)

04 June 2012, By Tarina White, The Cairns Post

UNESCO has warned the Great Barrier Reef could be listed as a World Heritage site in danger if Australia proceeds with industrial developments along the Queensland coast. In a scathing report, released on Saturday, the environmental arm of the UN expressed "significant concern" with the rapid increase of coastal developments, including ports infrastructure, and said "decisive action was required to secure the Reef's long-term conservation".

The UNESCO report follows a monitoring mission to Cairns and other Queensland communities in March to inspect the Reef, as well as industrial projects and port expansion proposals near the World Heritage area. The report, released in conjunction with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, called on Australia to "not permit any new port development or associated infrastructure outside of the existing and long-established major port areas within or adjoining the World Heritage area".

Premier Campbell Newman said halting port and industry development along Queensland's coast to protect the Reef was not an option.

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

Greens demand action on harbour dredging (QLD, Australia)

04 June 2012, Ninemsn

Two sites monitoring Gladstone Harbour's water quality have found unacceptably high levels of turbidity, or muddiness. The threshold was breached at two of the 16 monitoring stations late last week, according to data published online.

The Queensland Greens say the breaches have coincided with a UNESCO warning that the Great Barrier Reef could be listed as a world heritage site in danger. The party's Dr Libby Connors blames the dredging for the turbidity, and says the sediment is smothering seagrass shoots and poisoning marine life.

Rare Dugong population is on decline (India)

02 June 2012, Economic Times

Gujarat Ecological Education and Research (GEER) Foundation has suggested that a study should be taken up with the help of deep sea scuba divers to estimate the exact population of Dugong along the India coast.

The Dugong population off the coast of Lakshadweep Islands seems to be extinct as there have been no recent sightings in the region. Officials also said that Dugongs were common in Andaman & Nicobar Islands during the British era, but populations steeply declined later due to poaching and habitat destruction. Dugongs are reported in Ritchie's Archipelago, North Reef, Little Andaman, Camorta and Nicobar Islands. However, large populations are no longer seen and numbers are believed to have been falling since the 1950s.

Turtle to help measure Yasi's impact (QLD, Australia)

01 June 2012, By Sam Davis, ABC Online

Researchers say a green sea turtle being released in far north Queensland tomorrow could help further studies on the effects of Cyclone Yasi. The Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre [CTRC] will release the turtle at Cowley Beach, south of Innisfail with a tracking device attached to its shell.

CTRC co-founder, Dr Jennie Gilbert said the data will hopefully give her a better idea of where seagrass beds are growing best after being decimated by the category five cyclone in February last year. Dr Gilbert said the turtle was found at Kurrimine Beach last year suffering from starvation.

As part of her release, the turtle will be named by the Mandubarra people who have placed a self-imposed moratorium on turtle and dugong hunting. CTRC have released nine turtles this year with two more to be let go in the next fortnight.

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

Seagrass getting enough light: study (QLD, Australia)

27th June 2012, Gladstone Observer

Seagrass meadows are getting all the light they need in Gladstone Harbour. That is the analysis of Dr Michael Rasheed, Fisheries Queensland principal scientist and member of the Dredge Technical Reference Panel set up to provide input on the dredging project.

Dr Rasheed said light monitoring across all the seagrass sites showed turbidity was not preventing the required amount of sunlight to survive and grow. The data is important because critics say dredging is causing additional turbidity, which is preventing enough sunlight from reaching the meadows.

Dr Rasheed said seagrass was "critical" as it was the main food source for dugongs, turtles and other species. He also said seagrass meadows were recovering since the floods in early 2011 and that recovery had continued during dredging. "We've had a research program for the last two years looking at how much light do the seagrasses in Gladstone need to function and grow properly," Dr Rasheed said.

http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/story/2012/06/27/seagrass-get-enough-light-study-gladstone-harbour/

Bund wall springs a leak (QLD, Australia)

26th June 2012, Gladstone Observer

The bund wall at Fisherman's Landing is getting a facelift after failing to do its job properly since September. Gladstone Ports Corporation said in a media release that the Western Basin Dredging and Disposal Project's (WBDDP) reclamation area would undergo extra works over the next month to seal porous sections of the wall.

WBBDP Manager Peter O'Sullivan said leakages through the bund wall were contributing to increased turbidity in the harbour during high spring tides, as the water seeped through and under the wall and scoured the ocean floor directly in front of the wall.

The sealing process allows for continual dredging over a total of 30 days, however, the scientists and engineers on the DTRP are in agreement that this is the most effective way to resolve this problem and help restore seagrasses in the harbour, the release said. Fisheries Queensland principal scientist and DTRP member Dr Michael Rasheed said sealing the bund wall should be a priority to help protect local seagrasses. During the works, the independent DTRP will provide the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) with weekly status reports of volume dredge updates and achieved linear metres of bund sealed as per the Queensland Coordinator General's conditions. *Full story: http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/story/2012/06/26/bund-wall-springs-leak-work-gladstone-harbour/*

Turtles turned away as Cairns rehabilitation centre in crisis (QLD, Australia)

18 June 2012, by Bianca Keegan, The Cairns Post

A Cairns turtle rehabilitation centre has reached capacity and is being forced to turn away starving turtles after an increase in strandings. Paul Barnes, from Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, said the centre was at capacity with a large number of adult turtles found floating in the Coral Sea. Mr Barnes said seagrass stocks were depleted and had been only gradually recovering after cyclone Yasi ripped through north Queensland.

The rehabilitation centre is the largest of its kind in Queensland and is run by a group of 30 volunteers. Turtles found starving, with fishing and spear injuries or infected with papillomavirus are often taken to the centre. Mr Barnes said the centre runs mostly on donations.

Fisheries Queensland principal scientist Rob Coles said a reprieve could be in sight with seagrass slowly recovering. *Full story: http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2012/06/18/224445_local-news.html*

NY Poised to Protect Seagrass — "Trees of the Sound" (NY, USA)

22 June 2012, Public News Service

A measure designed to protect local seagrass soon should be headed to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, just as a new report shows action is needed to protect the state's multi-billion-dollar fishing industry. In the same way animals need trees in the forest, says Nate Woiwode, marine and coastal policy advisor for The Nature Conservancy, seagrass is critical to local waters. His group just released a federally funded study that shows seagrass has been devastated in the Northeast, with as much as 90 percent of historic seagrass in some parts of New York and New England now gone.

Woiwodie says nitrogen pollution from runoff water and air pollution from coal-fired power plants are two major factors believed to be causing the decline in seagrass. The state Senate soon should send the New York State Seagrass Protection Act to Cuomo for his expected signature. The bill, S.4287B/A.7988A, is cosponsored by Rep. Robert Sweeney, D- Lindenhurst, and Sen. Owen Johnson, R-Babylon,

The Nature Conservancy supports the measure, Woiwodie says, because it not only protects a vital resource but also involves communities on the east end of Long Island, which are the most impacted by the decline in seagrass. Woiwodie says coastal communities have a major role to play both in crafting solutions which will reduce the pollution that is killing off local seagrass, and also in protecting the most robust areas of seagrass that have survived.

Full story: http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/27091-1

Virginia Institute of Marine Science celebrates 40-year-old federal act (VA, USA)

12 June 2012, By Matt Sabo, Daily Press.com

Virginia blue crabs, healthy populations of seagrasses along the Goodwin Islands in the York River and protected Chesapeake Bay oyster sanctuaries are linked today by a federal act passed 40 years ago. The Coastal Zone Management Act, passed in 1972, was celebrated Monday at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in Gloucester Point where some of the fruits of the coastal protection measures — such as York River fish and crabs — were enjoyed for a buffet lunch by about three dozen people with direct or indirect ties to assisting in cleaning up, restoring and preserving shorelines.

The law established state coastal zone management programs and research reserves, where programs are tested to gauge the effects on plant and animal life. The work has its success stories, such as the thriving eel grass community off the Goodwin Islands and the movement toward living shorelines that incorporate rocks and native plants as shoreline buffers rather than bulkheads and groins.

Full story: http://www.dailypress.com/news/gloucester-county/dp-nws-gloucester-vims-coast-work-0612-20120612,0,1701215.story

QSIA Satisfied with UNESCO Report about Gladstone Harbour (QLD, Australia)

11 June 2012, Dredging Today

The Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) has welcomed the UNESCO report warning about the environmental concerns related to port development in Gladstone Harbour, reports farmonline.com.

QSIA president Geoff Tilton said: "Right now, fishermen are still catching fish and crabs with unexplained disease that makes them unsaleable. Fishermen are still seeing other marine life being affected as well, including turtles, birds and dugong." He said that fishermen believe the habitat destruction, silting and turbidity caused by reclamation, dredging and spoil-dumping have caused the damage to marine life.

The UNESCO inspection team that visited Gladstone has signalled the need for better environmental performance in Gladstone right now, and better environmental safeguards as port capacity is expanded elsewhere along the Queensland coast.

Full story: http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2012/06/11/australia-qsia-satisfied-with-unesco-report-about-gladstone-harbour/

Fishermen 'destroying fish habitat' (Penang, Malaysia)

09 June 2012, New Strait Times

The Consumer's Association of Penang (CAP) has warned that Malaysian waters would be left with zero marine resources if fishermen continued to use destructive techniques in fishing. The use of trawl nets, pukat buaya (crocodile net) and pukat Apollo (pair-trawl net) had caused a negative impacts on the seabed and marine environment, thus causing shortage of fish in the country.

CAP president S.M. Mohamed Idris said many trawlers fished at breeding and nursery grounds, and were using nets that might catch schools of fish fry, which depleted their population. He said in 2003, Malaysia's annual total fish landing exceeded the maximum sustainable yield, which was 900,000 tonnes, including a high percentage of "trash" fish. "Marine life habitats such as mangroves, sea grass beds and coral reefs, which are sanctuaries for reproductions and regeneration of marine life such as fish, prawns and crabs have been destroyed."

Idris said the rampant use of inappropriate fishing technologies and small mesh nets had been going on for too long, causing several fish species to become extinct. Idris warned that Malaysians might not have any fish to eat in another 20 years and suggested that the authorities ban fishing during the spawning period in fish spawning areas, as practised in India and China.

Full story: http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/fishermen-destroying-fish-habitat-1.92629

Three Congress members lobby for SunWest channel permit (FL, USA)

09 June 2012, By Lee Logan, Tampa Bay Times

Three members of Congress from the Tampa Bay area are pushing federal regulators to approved a proposed 4-mile channel at the SunWest property in Aripeka, saying the project would boost the economy and give boaters access to the Gulf of Mexico.

Last month, the Army Corps of Engineers said it would deny the project unless the county narrowed the channel or secured another five or six acres of seagrass mitigation to offset environmental damage from the dredge. In a May 16 letter, the Army Corps gave county officials 30 days to offer changes to the proposal or face likely denial.

County Commissioner Jack Mariano, a longtime supporter of the project, has complained that Corps officials are not giving the county enough credit for the mitigation it has already offered. Because of safety concerns, he said, he is unwilling to reduce the channel width to 45-50 feet, roughly the size of the Hudson channel. *Full story: http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/three-congress-members-lobby-for-sunwest-channel-permit/1234353 Related article: http://www2.hernandotoday.com/news/hernando-news/2012/jun/01/hanews01-dug-in-positions-ar-410405/*

Indian River Lagoon seagrasses recovering from algae bloom, but cause stumping scientists

08 June 2012, By Jim Reeder, TCPalm

Seagrass killed by a "super bloom" of algae in the northern Indian River Lagoon last year is coming back, but scientists still are trying to figure out what caused this bloom to be the worst in the past 20 years. Algae covered the Banana River near Cape Canaveral then spread mostly northward and westward. The Treasure Coast was spared from this huge outbreak, which started in March 2011 and reached its peak in October before it began to recede.

Dr. Edie Widder, head of the Ocean Research and Conservation Association in Fort Pierce, said seagrass roots are gone from some areas, making it unlikely the bed will regenerate. Widder said the super bloom of algae covered 31,600 acres of seagrass worth \$5,000 to \$10,000 an acre.

Algae growth is promoted by nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous flowing into the waterway. Several counties have adopted ordinances regulating the use of fertilizer on residential lawns. Some, such as Martin County, ban its use during the summer rainy reason while others have less drastic rules. Heavy rain on a fertilized lawn washes the nutrients into drainage ditches and eventually into the Indian River Lagoon.

Full story: http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2012/jun/08/seagrasses-recovering-from-huge-algae-bloom-but/

Human Activity and Climate Change Threaten Tourism in Jamaica (Kingston, Jamaica)

06 June 2012, By Zadie Neufville, Inter Press Service

Experts here fear that that the impact of climate change on Jamaica's fragile ecosystems will worsen the ravages of human activity and destroy the country's tourism industry. The sector is aware of the challenges it faces, Tina Williams, a director in the ministry of tourism, told IPS. She noted that sea level rise is expected to inundate much of the island's coastal areas, its infrastructure, hotels and attractions. The sector's dependence on natural ecosystems places it on the frontline of the climate change fight. Yet the industry itself has exacted a heavy toll on the local environment, causing irreversible damage in some areas.

But nowhere is the situation more telling than along the Negril coastline. Here, the sand dunes have long given way to concrete houses, hotels and sewage plants. Here, scientists say, the widespread destruction of coastal vegetation, forests and wetlands is providing a glimpse of the ravages climate change is expected to bring. Negril's tourism infrastructure was built at the expense of its coastal wetlands. Coastal mangrove forests and seagrass beds were removed to provide access to the gleaming white sands that tourists love.

Now, the famous white sand that earns roughly half of Jamaica's tourism earnings is being washed away at rates between a half and one metre per year. The erosion, scientists from the University of the West Indies (UWI) have found, is the direct result of development. When they removed the wetlands, developers destroyed the carbon-secreting organisms that inhabited the seagrass beds and produced at least half of the sand. *Full story: http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=108062*

Study to provide global perspective on our seagrass (Bermuda)

06 June 2012, Simon Jones, Bermuda Sun

Bermuda's seagrass meadows have been put under the microscope to help protect the species' global population. The data collected during the study will be used by agencies across the world to improve conservation techniques. And it will help bolster initiatives that are currently in place to safeguard the island's valuable seagrass population.

The two-year study focused on the damaging effects old chain moorings have on the seagrass growth. And it came after Bermuda witnessed a 25 per cent decline in its seagrass meadows between the mid 1990s and 2004. Scientists hope their work will raise awareness of the vital role seagrass plays in providing marine habitats as well as capturing carbon from the sea.

Researcher Dr Samia Sarkis told the Bermuda Sun the study had also demonstrated the benefits of environmentally friendly moorings. Over the last two years Dr Sarkis has compared seagrass growth in areas of the island where environmentally friendly moorings are used with a site where chain moorings have caused 'halos' or bare patches to develop in the seagrass.

Full story: http://bermudasun.bm/main.asp?SectionID=24&SubSectionID=270&ArticleID=58886

Gladstone Harbour Toxicity Levels Threaten Marine Life (QLD, Australia)

04 June 2012, Dredging Today

Monitoring stations at Gladstone Harbour recorded dangerously high turbidity levels at the same time as UNESCO was issuing dire warnings about the possible degradation of the Great Barrier Reef's World Heritage status last week. Queensland Greens spokesperson, Dr Libby Connors says the turbidity caused by dredging in the harbour stirs up sediments containing toxic heavy metals.

UNESCO's State of Conservation Report on the Great Barrier Reef released on 1 June warns that the Great Barrier Reef's World Heritage Status will be classed as in Danger if further development is approved without an assessment of cumulative impacts. It specifically criticises the management of development in Gladstone Harbour and its "inadequate independent, scientific oversight".

Dr Connors says the Queensland Government has just eight months to restore the harbour's environmental health. The government's first step should be to instruct the Department of Environment and Heritage to restore the former environmental standards for turbidity, she said. Dr Connors said that soon after Campbell Newman took office the Department of Environment and Heritage raised the permitted turbidity level so that port developers could continue dredging even during the muddiest periods and not receive an Environmental Protection Order to stop. *Full story: http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2012/06/04/greens-gladstone-harbour-toxicity-levels-threaten-marine-life-australia/*

SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine (Issue 45+46)- NOW ONLINE

The official magazine of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program available online http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html

This is a special bumper double issue focusing on dugongs (Issue 45) and manatees (Issue 46) and our guest editor was Distinguished Professor Helene Marsh. Helene is an international authority on the conservation biology of dugongs, sea turtles and coastal cetaceans. Helene also co-authored the recent publication " Ecology and Conservation of the Sirenia: Dugongs and Manatees" (see magazine for more info).

Issue 45 - Dugongs

Dugongs are highly dependent on seagrass communities and this issue explains that contrary to perceived wisdom, they eat virtually all seagrass species within the dugong's range. In this issue you can read more about the 2011 extreme weather events in Queensland and how dugongs responded to the loss of their seagrass habitats. Many animals died, others left the urban Great Barrier Reef region, presumably for the greener pastures further north where the vast seagrass meadows off Cape York escaped the ravages of cyclones and floods (as revealed by recent helicopter surveys). Further north again, the Torres Strait between Australia and Papua New Guinea is not only the 'dugong capital of the world', but as recently discovered, also boasts one of the largest seagrass meadows in Australia. You can also read about dugongs in Singapore, the southern Philippines, and how the UNEP-CMS Dugong MOU is trying to make a difference.

Issue 46 - Manatees

Compared with the dugong, all four species of manatee eat a wide range of aquatic plants. Nonetheless, seagrasses are important components of the diets of two of the manatee species: the West Indian manatee (and its subspecies the Florida manatee) and the West African manatee, all of which are featured in this special issue. We are particularly delighted to include an article on the West African manatee, the 'forgotten sirenian'. Read how tracking manatees using satellite and GPS technology can be used to map seagrass communities, and how stable isotope techniques are being used to unravel the relationship between manatees and seagrasses in West Africa and Brazil.

PUBLICATIONS:

McKenzie, LJ & Yoshida, R.L. (2012). Seagrass-Watch: Proceedings of a workshop for monitoring seagrass habitats in the Gold Coast region, South East Queensland. David Fleay Wildlife Park, Burleigh Heads, Queensland, 30 June - 01 July 2012 (Seagrass-Watch HQ, Cairns). 58pp. [2.7Mb]

http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/proceedings/Gold_Coast_Jun12.pdf

GALLERY

Moreton Bay, Qld (Australia): 17-18 June 2012 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Wynnum, 17 June 2012 Wellington Point, 18 June 2012

Pulau Semakau (Singapore): 10 June 2012 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

It's a bright blue sky day and a small team is out to monitor seagrasses at Pulau Semakau! Siti gives a thorough briefing on the methods and seagrass identification before we begin. It's good to see that much of the Tape seagrasses here are nice and long! Many of those I measure were 40-50cm long!

Cape York, Qld (Australia): May - June 2012 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Bathurst Bay, 03 June 2012 Stanley Island, 04 June 2012

CONFERENCES

ICRS 2012 (Cairns, Australia from 9 – 13 July 2012)

12th International Coral Reef Symposium (http://www.icrs2012.com/)

In July 2012, the world's leading natural scientists, resource managers, conservationists, economists, educators and students will meet together in Cairns, Australia for the 12th International Coral Reef symposium.

This major international scientific conference is held every four years and provides the latest knowledge and leading edge technologies about coral reefs and reef environments worldwide.

This 5 day event will bring together 2,500 people from some 80 countries, to communicate their science and hear the latest advances from the international experts in coral reef science. This research and findings will be fundamental in informing international and national policies and protocols in the conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs and the coral reef environment.

Mini-Symposium: Seagrasses and seagrass ecosystems (http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Info_centre/conferences/ICRS2012/Flyer_ICRS2012_Seagrass.pdf)

Seagrass meadows are an important component of tropical coastal waters. They are part of the complex ecosystem that supports the productivity of coral reefs and reef environments. There is evidence that seagrass populations are declining and this will impact on associated ecosystems. Our knowledge of tropical seagrass systematics, ecology, trends, connectivity and the anthropogenic threats to seagrass communities has improved greatly in the last decade. The symposium will bring together recent findings to enhance our understanding of seagrass associated with coral reef environments.

International Seagrass Biology Workshop ISBW10 (Brazil, 25-30 November 2012)

The Tenth International Seagrass Biology Workshop will be held from 25-30 November 2012 at the Pontal da Ferradura Convention Centre in Búzios, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. ISBW10 will be hosted by Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro and the Instituto Biodiversidade Marinha. ISBW10 convenor is Dr Joel Creed. With the emphasis on providing an agreeable and comfortable environment to talk serious seagrass science the workshop will be organized into:

Plenary lectures from invited speakers.

Oral and poster presentations addressing specific topics within major themes.

Half-day study groups, which will consist of multi-disciplinary team activities focused on cutting-edge global and regional issues in seagrass research, methods, conservation, reviews and habitat health.

Fieldtrip to local seagrass habitats.

Important Dates

25th June 2012 Early bird registration closes 25th July 2012 Last day to submit abstracts 10th October 2012 Last day for cancellation 10th October 2012 Abstract acceptance communicated 15th October 2012 Last day for payment 25-29 November 2012 ISBW10

for more information, visit <u>http://isbw10.org/</u>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2012

Australia http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop12

Gold Coast, QLD: 30 June and 01 July (Closed)

Broome, WA: 29 - 30 September

Whitsunday, QLD: 13 - 14 October

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 23,299 views to date)

...seagrass matters blog

World Seagrass Association blog http://wsa.seagrassonline.org/blog/

Keep up to date on what's happening around the world from the WSA with regular updates from WSA President Dr Giuseppe Di Carlo and *notes from the field* by Siti Yaakub.

FROM HQ

Past E-bulletins http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#ebulletin

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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 HQ is supported by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Fisheries Queensland (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) and by private donations.

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

www.seagrasswatch.org