



12 July 2013

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NEWS

Reef's health now officially 'poor' (Australia)

10 July 2013, *The Australian*, From: AAP

The health of the Great Barrier Reef has dropped from moderate to poor, a new government report card shows. The federal government's long-awaited Great Barrier Reef 2011 report card was released on Wednesday and the news is not good. Seagrass is in very poor condition, and cover has continued to decline since 2006-07.

The report says the 2010-11 natural disasters "significantly impacted" on the marine environment, and caused more sediment to be discharged from rivers, especially from the Fitzroy and Proserpine rivers. The report said surveys

indicated Cyclone Yasi caused 15 per cent of the total reef area to suffer some coral damage. Full recovery will take decades, it said.

Water quality improvements are on a "positive trajectory", the report said. But Queensland farmers are still way off meeting 2013 targets to reduce run off. Nitrogen, pesticides and sediment are the greatest risks to the reef's water quality. The annual average total nitrogen run off onto the reef reduced by seven per cent between 2009 and 2011 and pesticides by 15 per cent. But that's way off the target of 50 per cent by 2013. Sediment was reduced by six per cent overall - 14 per cent below the 2013 target.

Only 17 per cent of graziers have improved practices between 2009 and 2011, well short of the 50 per cent target by 2013. And 34 per cent of sugar cane farmers improved, well short of the 80 per cent target by 2013. Inshore water quality and inshore coral reefs were rated poor overall.

Full story: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/reefs-health-now-officially-poor/story-fn3dxiwe-1226677053297>

Story also covered by:

<http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/national/reefs-health-now-officially-poor/story-e6frku9-1226677053297>

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/latest/a/-/latest/17942265/reefs-health-now-officially-poor/>

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/great-barrier-reefs-health-declines-20130710-2ppl3.html>

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/national/2013/07/10/12/17/reef-s-health-now-officially-poor>

<http://www.skynews.com.au/eco/article.aspx?id=886741>

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1787586/Reefs-health-now-officially-poor>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jul/10/great-barrier-reef-report-card>

<http://www.asiaone.com/News/Latest%2BNews/Relax/Story/A1Story20130710-436123.html>

<http://cowracommunitynews.com/viewnews.php?newsid=4109&id=15>

<http://www.themorningbulletin.com.au/news/progress-being-made-address-barrier-reef/1940402/>

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/latest/a/-/latest/17945969/australia-admits-barrier-reef-conditions-are-poor/>

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/great-barrier-reef-now-rated-poor-20130710-2pqqd.html>

<http://frenchtribune.com/teneur/1319016-great-barrier-reef-danger>

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130710/australias-barrier-reef-slips-poor-health-0>

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/great-barrier-reef-now-rated-poor-20130710-2pqqd.html>

<http://gulfnnews.com/news/world/other-world/australia-great-barrier-reef-slips-into-poor-health-1.1207510>

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/protect-barrier-reef-or-face-catastrophe-say-environmental-groups-20130710-2pq3o.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/10170929/Great-Barrier-reefs-condition-declines-to-poor.html>

<http://www.sandandgravel.com/news/article.asp?v1=17370>

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2013/07/10/Great-Barrier-reefs-condition-is-declining/UPI-66361373475159/

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2013/s3800234.htm>

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/great-barrier-reef-report-card-shows-world-heritage-site8217s-health-has-dropped-to-8216poor8217/story-fnii5v70-1226677452185>

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2013/07/10/Great-Barrier-reefs-condition-is-declining/UPI-66361373475159/

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jul/10/great-barrier-reef-report-card>

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/conservation/great-barrier-reef-now-rated-poor-20130710-2pqqd.html>

<http://ens-newswire.com/2013/07/10/ministers-ignore-industrial-threats-to-great-barrier-reef/>

<http://topnews.us/content/255861-health-great-barrier-reef-goes-down>

<http://www.bworldonline.com/weekender/content.php?id=73218>

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/swift-action-essential-to-avoid-sacrificing-the-barrier-reef-20130711-2pt0c.html>

Something in a Florida Lagoon Is Killing Manatees, Dolphins & Pelicans — But No One Knows What (FL, USA)

11 July 2013, by Liz Klimas, *TheBlaze.com*

Since this time last year 51 dolphins, 111 manatees and up to 300 pelicans have been found dead in Florida's Indian River Lagoon, but no one can figure out what the mysterious killer is, according to a report by Wired. Whatever is causing the animals to perish works so fast, the report stated, that some of the manatees still have food in their mouths, although it wasn't their typical food. Interestingly enough, other dead wildlife animals seems to be starving. indian river lagoon

Several agencies – St. Johns River Water Management District, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Hubbs–SeaWorld Research Institute and NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center — are evaluating various facets of these unusual deaths related to the lagoon. According to St. Johns River Water Management District, in 2011 a "superbloom" of algae occurred, killing about 60 percent of the system's seagrass, a primary source of food for the manatees and of importance for fish as well. A second brown tide boom occurred in August 2012. Seagrass coverage can be seen declining dramatically in the area in the last few years.

Wired reported that the widespread manatee death began last July, reached a height this spring and seems to have tapered from there. "They're in good body condition from what we can tell, no other diseases or signs of trauma," Veterinarian Martine DeWit with FWC said, according to Wired of the manatees. The food in some of the manatee's digestive tracts, DeWit said, is unusual for them though: Instead of sea grass, pathologists are finding macroalgae,

mostly Gracilaria, in the manatees' digestive tracts. This type of seaweed is normally not toxic. But, "on microscopic examination of the tissues, we found some inflammation in the wall of their gastrointestinal system," DeWit said, noting that the changes were only minor. "Our first thought is it has to be something associated with the algae – something in the sediment, absorbed by the algae, or a compound of the algae itself."

Full story: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2013/07/11/something-in-a-florida-lagoon-is-killing-manatees-dolphins-pelicans-but-no-one-knows-what/>

Story also covered by:
<http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2013/07/dolphins-and-manatees/all/>

Opposition Group Urges 'No' Vote on Long Bar Pointe (FL, USA)

10 July 2013, by Dennis Maley, *The Bradenton Times*

MANATEE COUNTY -- Save Manatee Coastline is one of several groups trying to persuade the Manatee County Commission to vote no on August 6, when it will decide whether to allow major revisions to a planned waterfront development project behind IMG Academy. The group's founder said their goal is simple and zero sum, votes of "no" on the Long Bar Pointe map amendment, the county wide text amendment and any future similar amendments that would allow construction in the Coastal High Hazard Area, as well as any other area that would result in damage to or removal of mangrove trees or seagrass. "Hopefully this would send a message to the developers that we consider our shorelines to be sacred land that should not be destroyed or damaged for any reason," said Goff. "These wetlands provide habitats for many types of wildlife including birds, fish, manatees and dolphins. The ecosystem along shorelines is very fragile and should not be disturbed."

Long Bar Pointe was already going to be a major coastal development after the Manatee County Commission approved plans to build over 4,000 homes, plus 150,000 sq ft of commercial space in 2008. However, if developers Carlos Beruff and Larry Lieberman get their way, the property will now include a major resort, as well as a large marina. The proposed dredging required of the marina would also wreak havoc on area seagrass, another impact that Goff warns against.

"Within seagrass communities, a single acre of seagrass can produce over 10 tons of leaves per year," said Goff. "This vast biomass provides food, habitat, and nursery areas for a myriad of adult and juvenile vertebrates and invertebrates. Further, a single acre of seagrass may support as many as 40,000 fish, and 50 million small invertebrates. Because seagrasses support such high biodiversity, and because of their sensitivity to changes in water quality, they have become recognized as important indicator species that reflect the overall health of coastal ecosystems. Failure to protect seagrass could have a catastrophic effect on Sarasota Bay and would result in devastation of the fishing community of Cortez Village."

Full story: http://www.thebradentontimes.com/news/2013/07/10/environment/opposition_group_urges_no_vote_on_long_bar_pointe/

New book: Fiji's first mangroves and seagrass guide

09 July 2013, IUCN

The first ever field guide for Fiji's mangroves and seagrasses was launched yesterday by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, Mr. Tevita Boseiwaqa, marking another breakthrough in the conservation of biodiversity in the country.

Fiji has over 38,000 hectares of land that is covered by mangrove forests, with the largest stands found in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. There are twelve known species of mangroves found in Fiji. Like mangroves, seagrasses are flowering plants that grow in marine areas and are closely related to taro and water lilies. Seagrasses are important breeding ground for fishes and are also used locally for roofing, basket weaving and food. There are about 60 seagrass species found worldwide and six of these are common throughout Fiji.

The 75 page field guide provides photographs and information such as local names, uses, and distribution, of the twelve mangrove and six seagrass species. Identification of species is made easier by an easy-to-follow dichotomous key which assists users in correctly identifying species. The field guide is simple and designed for a wide range of audience – from conservationists to students, teachers and others including those with limited knowledge in science.

The production of the field guide was made possible through the efforts of the Fiji Department of Environment, the University of the South Pacific and IUCN Oceania through the Mangrove Ecosystems for Climate Change Adaptation and Livelihoods (MESCAL) project.

Full story: <http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/oceania/?13344/New-book-Fijis-first-mangroves-and-seagrass-guide>

Story also covered by:

<http://www.islandsbusiness.com/news/fiji/1833/new-book-fijis-first-mangroves-and-seagrass-guide/>

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1307/S00193/new-book-fijis-first-mangroves-and-seagrass-guide.htm>

<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/report-card-on-the-health-of-pacific-mangroves/1159642>

<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=239503>

Decision looms over Qld reef dredging (Australia)

08 July 2013, by Cleo Fraser, AAP

Federal Environment Minister Mark Butler has until Tuesday to decide whether he will allow the dredging of millions of tonnes of soil in the Great Barrier Reef world heritage area. However, the new minister may extend the deadline to give himself more time to consider the proposal.

North Queensland Bulk Ports want to dredge three million tonnes of seabed at Abbot Point, near Bowen, to make way for proposed expansions at the coal port. A spokeswoman from the minister's office says Mr Butler has the option to extend the July 9 deadline, but they wouldn't say if this had been pushed back.

Felicity Wishart, of the Australian Marine Conservation Society, is urging the minister to reject the plans, saying dredging will damage the reef. "These plans must be scrapped," she said. "There should be no massive dredging of the seafloor and it definitely shouldn't be dumped in the clear waters near the Whitsunday Islands." Ms Wishart says if the plan is approved it will pave the way for construction of a mega-port at Abbot Point.

Bulk Ports boss Brad Fish has previously said dredging could possibly make the water cloudy over a short period and damage or destroy seagrass but would unlikely affect other flora and fauna. Applications to dredge the seabed are considered separate to the port expansions which have been proposed but not approved. Last month the World Heritage Committee told Australia it must present a plan on how to protect the reef from increasing coal and gas extraction and shipping.

Full story: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/decision-looms-over-qld-reef-dredging/story-fni0xqi4-1226676032239>

related articles: <http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2013/07/09/australian-greens-urge-minister-butler-to-reject-abbot-point-dredging-proposal/>
<http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2013/07/08/australia-new-environment-minister-faces-first-great-barrier-reef-test/>

Huge seagrass regrowth at Qld port (Australia)

5 July 2013, SBS, source: AAP

Scientists have recorded significant growth of seagrass at Queensland's Gladstone Harbour, but other areas aren't faring so well. Seagrass is making an unlikely comeback at a large Queensland port that's been criticised by green groups for damaging the environment. But the new findings, released by James Cook University's seagrass monitoring program on Friday, paint a grim picture for the flora in other areas of the state.

During 2010 and 2011 huge areas of seagrass were wiped out by heavy rainfall, flooding and cyclones. Of the populated areas monitored by researchers, only Gladstone Harbour, Townsville and off-shore areas of Abbott Point near Bowen saw significant regrowth in 2012. At Gladstone Harbour, where the highest growth was recorded, researchers found meadows had expanded by 700 hectares. The amount of seagrass in the area is now what it was in 2010.

Dr Rasheed says activities at Gladstone Harbour are likely affecting seagrass, but the port's water quality management scheme is encouraging growth. Researchers found there has been far less growth in coastal areas at Abbott Point near Bowen, Weipa, Cairns, Innisfail, Karumba and Mackay. Dr Rasheed says it has been difficult for seagrass to bounce back in these areas as such large chunks were destroyed during storms such as Cyclone Oswald. The seagrass monitoring program is partly funded by the Gladstone Ports Corporation.

Full story: <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1786104/Huge-seagrass-regrowth-at-Qld-port>

Story also covered by:

<http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2013/07/05/gpc-seagrass-is-flourishing-in-gladstone-harbour-australia/>

<http://www.cqnews.com.au/news/seagrass-study-shows-recovery-in-port-harbour/1934753/>

<http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/news/seagrass-study-shows-recovery-in-port-harbour/1934753/>

SEQ Catchments wins Australian Business Award second year running (QLD, Australia)

4th of July 2013, SEQ Catchments

SEQ Catchments has won the Environmental Sustainability category in The Australian Business Awards 2013 in recognition of its ground breaking work to protect seagrass beds and the economically important industries of Moreton Bay. The Moreton Bay Seagrass Recovery Program replaced traditional moorings with Australian designed seagrass friendly moorings in the largest seagrass recovery effort ever achieved in Australia. Seagrass is expected to regrow over an area the size of 18 football fields and improve a further 120ha of marine ecosystems, by removing the 'crop circle' effect of traditional moorings in which chains drag around on seagrass meadows as the tide moves in and out.

SEQ Catchments CEO Simon Warner says, "The Moreton Bay Seagrass Recovery Program is an example of our innovative approach to achieving economic and environmental outcomes. "Protecting seagrass is vital to Moreton Bay's economically valuable nature-based tourism, and commercial and recreational fishing industries. Seagrass meadows are the nursery grounds for many commercial fish and crustacean species; they provide feeding grounds for dugongs and green and loggerhead turtles as well as playing an important role in preventing coastal erosion.

www.seagrasswatch.org

Their importance cannot be underestimated. "It is extremely gratifying to receive national recognition from the broader business community of the economic relevance of environmental sustainability.

Ms Tara Johnston, Program Director, The Australian Business Awards says, "SEQ Catchments is a worthy recipient and has demonstrated a commitment to excellence that stands out amongst a dynamic field of Australia's elite. "The Australian Business Awards recognise our most innovative organisations, their outstanding achievements and contribution to the Australian economy. The awards raise the bar across all aspects of quality management and provide organisations with ways to review their business and product performance as well as identify their core strengths," Ms Johnston adds.

You can view a video about the Moreton Bay Seagrass Recovery Program at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORHIsOB9alA> and find further information about SEQ Catchments at <http://www.seqcatchments.com.au/case-studies/mooring-trial-to-end-crop-circles-in-moreton-bay>
Full story: <http://www.mysunshinecoast.com.au/articles/article-display/seq-catchments-wins-australian-business-award-second-year-running,30506>
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

NQBP: Abbot Point Long Term Monitoring Report (Australia)

02 July 2013, Dredging Today

North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation (NQBP) is the organisation responsible for managing and monitoring Abbot Point's port environment, and they have recognised that seagrasses are an important and sensitive component of marine habitats within the port and are committed to monitoring and maintaining the health of these habitats. These monitoring areas represent the range of seagrass communities within the port and include meadows considered most likely to be impacted by port activity and development, as well as areas unlikely to be impacted by port development, to assist in separating out port related versus regional causes of seagrass change detected in the monitoring program. This report summarises the results of the coastal and deep water seagrass monitoring program conducted between September 2011 and September 2012, as well as light (PAR) and temperature measurements at the Port of Abbot Point.

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

GALLERY

Yule Point, Qld (Australia): 25 June 2013 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Singapore: 08-09,15-16 June 2013 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Noosa, Qld (Australia): 24-26 April 2013 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Cape York, Qld (Australia): 23-27 April 2013 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Townsville, Qld (Australia): 23-27 April 2013 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

CONFERENCES

CERF 2013 Conference (San Diego, California, 3-7 November 2013)

22nd Biennial Conference of the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation
Toward Resilient Coasts and Estuaries, Science for Sustainable Solutions.

CERF advances understanding and wise stewardship of estuarine and coastal ecosystems worldwide. Its mission is to: Promote research in estuarine and coastal ecosystems, Support education of scientists, decision-makers and the public, and Facilitate communication among these groups. The 2013 scientific program offers four days of timely, exciting and diverse information on a vast array of estuarine and coastal subjects. Presentations will include discoveries and synthesis on the adaptive dynamics of coastal and estuarine ecosystems and human societies. Participants will explore how these dynamics and adaptations can be understood and managed at regional and global scales. CERF will convene about 1,600 Scientists, Managers and professionals in government, business, nonprofit and related organizations, and Graduate students. From North America's coastal states and provinces, as well as from more than 20 countries around the world, CERF conference attendees are scientists and managers who conduct research and observe/manage change within a variety of global coastal and estuarine habitats. They rely on the information, expertise, methods, products, technology and innovative equipment your organization provides.

Please visit the conference & workshop web site for further details: <http://www.erf.org/cerf2013>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2013

Australia <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop13>

Moreton Bay, Qld: 17-18 August 2013r

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 29,565 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>

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 HQ is supported by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), TropWATER (James Cook University) and by private donations.

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