



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

30 June 2013

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IN THIS BULLETIN

NEWS	1
Monitoring Gladstone harbour key to keeping industry honest (QLD, Australia).....	1
Dugong disappearing fast from Trang (Thailand).....	2
UNESCO postpones decision about adding Great Barrier Reef to 'in danger' list (Australia)	2
Researchers induce Japan's first artificial bloom of rare seagrass (Japan)	2
World Heritage gets mixed message on reef (Australia).....	3
Taylor Creek muck removal helps seagrass beds in Fort Pierce (FL, USA)	3
Ports North pushes ahead with Trinity Inlet dredging in Cairns (QLD, Australia).....	3
Push to protect reef (Australia).....	4
GTMO volunteers help to capture and tag manatees (Cuba)	4
Eelgrass continues its comeback in coastal bays (VA, USA).....	4
Endangered seagrass thrives in the waters of Jervis Bay (NSW, Australia)	4
Hundreds hunted in swan shoot (New Zealand)	5
Long Bar Pointe plans would alter appearance of Sarasota Bay (FL, USA)	5
GALLERY	5
Yule Point, Qld (Australia): 25 June 2013	5
Singapore: 08-09,15-16 June 2013	5
CONFERENCES	6
CERF 2013 Conference (San Diego, California, 3-7 November 2013).....	6
SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2013.....	6
SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube	6
...seagrass matters blog.....	6
World Seagrass Association blog.....	6
FROM HQ.....	6
Past E-bulletins	6
Frequently Asked Questions	6
Seagrass-Watch Magazine	6
Seagrass-Watch Shop	6
Virtual Herbarium	6
Giveaways.....	6
Future sampling dates.....	6
Handy Seagrass Links!.....	6

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

NEWS

Monitoring Gladstone harbour key to keeping industry honest (QLD, Australia)

25 June 2013, by Allen Winter, Gladstone Observer

The Gladstone Ports Corporation yesterday released a tome of work relating to monitoring of the Gladstone harbour. It's 263 pages long and covers every possible aspect of concern in our harbour, from seagrass through to tourism, and absolutely everything in between. Harbour monitoring over the past 20 years, according to GPC chief executive Leo Zussino, has cost more than \$100 million.

It seems like an incredibly large amount of cash, but if that's what it takes to keep industry and the corporation honest then that's what it takes. It's essential that such studies are carried out to ensure our environment is damaged no more than is absolutely necessary in an industrial city. And it's only with monitoring, and reports such as the one released yesterday, that we can be sure interests other than industry are being looked after.

However, one wonders who will have time or inclination to read such a massive report - it's hardly what you would call bedside reading.

source: <http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/news/monitoring-harbour-key-to-development/1919928/>

Dugong disappearing fast from Trang (Thailand)

19 June 2013, *The Nation*

Trang's dwindling dugong population is now threatened with extinction as the Seagrass meadows it feeds upon in the waters around Koh Libong have shrunk to 7,306 square rai.

The head of Trang's Marine and coastal resources conservation centre, Prachuap Mokharat, said yesterday that a March survey found Trang's population of dugongs had fallen to between 110 and 115. Most of the dugongs (67 to 70) live in Koh Libong's Laem Chu Hoi and their population is in decline.

Prachuap said a survey also revealed that the dugong's Seagrass fields had shrunk sharply, from 12,173 square rai in 2006 to only 7,306 square rai in 2011. The Seagrass has been decimated by large cargo ships that ply the main shipping route near the island, with increased sediment levels another destructive factor. Prachuap thus urged all parties to co-operate to prevent the disappearance of the rare mammal from Trang's waters.

<http://www.asianewsnet.net/Dugong-disappearing-fast-from-southern-Thailand-48132.html>

UNESCO postpones decision about adding Great Barrier Reef to 'in danger' list (Australia)

18 June 2013, by Sarah Clarke and Stephanie Smail, *ABC*

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has deferred a decision to place the Great Barrier Reef on its "World Heritage in Danger" list.

The World Heritage Committee, currently meeting for its annual session in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, has been tasked with determining if the Great Barrier Reef is in trouble. UNESCO raised concerns about the level of development along the Queensland coast and its impact on the World Heritage site, including water quality and the loss of coral. The committee was considering whether to adopt UNESCO's recommendations to stop new approvals for port developments along the Queensland coast.

Kimberley Dripps from the federal Environment Department told the hearing that progress was being made to address their concerns and stated that Australia was committed to protecting the site. The Queensland Government has representatives in Phnom Penh as well. The committee agreed to adopt a draft decision to defer the matter until the next UNESCO meeting in 2014.

The dredging involved with port development and increased shipping through the reef have sparked widespread concern among conservationists. Louise Mathieson from Greenpeace says the decision gives the state and federal governments a chance to wind back port developments and improve the quality of the reef. Felicity Wishart from the Australian Marine Conservation Society is calling on the State Government to make its conservation plans for the reef public.

full story: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/latest/a/-/latest/17653704/unesco-postpones-decision-about-adding-great-barrier-reef-to-in-danger-list/>

Story also covered by:

http://www.laprensasa.com/309_america-in-english/2098481_unesco-puts-off-adding-great-barrier-reef-to-endangered-sites-list.html

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-21/environment-minister-confident-of-unesco-approval/4773190?section=qld>

<http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/news/city-at-heart-of-environmental-debate/1918340/>

Researchers induce Japan's first artificial bloom of rare seagrass (Japan)

18 June 2013, *Mainichi Daily News*

Researchers at the Tsukuba Botanical Garden here successfully induced the seagrass "*Halophila ovalis*" -- commonly known as spoon or paddle grass - to bloom on June 8, it has been learned.

According to Norio Tanaka, a researcher at the botanical garden, "It is the first blooming of the plant at a botanical garden in Japan." Paddle grass, designated a near-endangered species on the Ministry of the Environment's red list, has proven difficult to cultivate. If researchers can reproduce it in an artificial environment, it will aid efforts to conserve the seagrass.

The Tsukuba Botanical Garden began working to cultivate the seagrasses in 2009, and last year turned its efforts to paddle grass. Researchers there have attempted to recreate a natural ocean environment using seawater and organisms like hermit crabs and shrimp.

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

World Heritage gets mixed message on reef (Australia)

17 June 2013, by Graham Lloyd, The Australian

When the World Heritage committee meets in Cambodia this week it will receive conflicting signals on how seriously Australia takes its global responsibility to safeguard the Great Barrier Reef.

The UNESCO meeting will not decide whether the government should be shamed with the declaration of an "in danger" listing for one of the world's greatest environmental assets.

source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/world-heritage-gets-mixed-message-on-reef/story-fn59nm2j-1226664723590>

Story also covered by:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/16/barrier-reef-un-heritage-status>

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/travel/australia/barrier-reef-vies-for-heritage-listing/story-fni0b6jw-1226664766596>

<http://www.zeibiz.com/2013/06/unesco-to-meet-on-great-barrier-reef-situation/>

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/world/2013/06/17/01/20/barrier-reef-vies-for-heritage-listing>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-17/more-time-tipped-for-barrier-reef-protection-policies/4757720?section=qld>

<http://au.ibtimes.com/articles/479379/20130617/australia-unesco-great-barrier-reef.htm>

<http://www.skynews.com.au/eco/article.aspx?id=880596>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/18/great-barrier-reef-united-nations>

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/australian-it/government/great-barrier-reef-becomes-a-sounding-board-for-science/story-fn4htb9o-1226665210256>

<http://frenchtribune.com/teneur/1318676-unesco-might-mark-great-barrier-reef-australia-syrian-sites-endangered>

<http://www.news.com.au/travel/australia/barrier-reef-vies-for-heritage-listing/story-e6frfq89-1226664766596>

Taylor Creek muck removal helps seagrass beds in Fort Pierce (FL, USA)

11 June 2013, by Matthew Levin, Treasure Coast Newspapers

St. Lucie County has authorized a Taylor Creek restoration project that will remove thick beds of muck that can flow into the Indian River Lagoon and smother seagrass beds. The muck removal is the final stage of a multi-part effort to clear gunk — mainly runoff from residential properties, farms and other development — that clogs the waters. "Those sediments just find their way down the system," said Don West, county public works director.

Plans to remove the sediment began in 1998. The county dredged 94,000 cubic yards of muck from the navigation channel, between the Intracoastal Waterway west to the railroad bridge, in 2004. Officials expect to complete the project by removing the upstream muck by summer 2014.

Dredging raises a couple of environmental concerns about turbidity and manatees. A suction dredge is designed to keep down turbidity. The project window — April to September — was timed to avoid interfering with manatee migration patterns, and a spotter will be on site looking for them, West said.

full story: <http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2013/jun/11/our-indian-river-lagoon-taylor-creek-muck-helps/>

Ports North pushes ahead with Trinity Inlet dredging in Cairns (QLD, Australia)

06 June 2013, by Sharnie Kim, ABC News

Ports North says it will not hold off on plans to dredge Trinity Inlet in Cairns in far north Queensland to allow seagrass levels to recover.

James Cook University (JCU) research released last week found seagrass at a record-low in the inlet and Cairns Harbour and had suffered an unprecedented decline over the past three years. Ports North is funding the monitoring work as part of its environmental impact statement (EIS) process and needs state and federal approval.

Chairman Brett Moller says the corporation will make a decision about whether to proceed with the project once the EIS is finalised. "We need to let the process take its course and there's further methodology and further studies being completed as part of the EIS," he said. "The science has got to take place and it has a big part to play." He says any outcomes should not be pre-empted. "We need the qualified scientists to go about and do their business," he said. "We do this annually - we work closely with JCU. "It's just business as usual for us in making sure we have good environmental outcomes."

source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-06/ports-north-pushes-ahead-with-trinity-inlet-dredging-cairns/4736704?section=business>

Story also covered by:

<http://www.sandandgravel.com/news/article.asp?v1=17251>

Push to protect reef (Australia)

05 June 2013, G-Online

Further industrialisation along the Great Barrier Reef coastline will destroy the already fragile ecosystem, says a declaration released today. Over 150 of Australia's leading marine and coastal scientists today released a signed declaration stating that further industrialisation along the Great Barrier Reef coastline will destroy the already fragile ecosystem.

"The scientific evidence that the Great Barrier Reef is already suffering is crystal clear," says Professor Hugh Possingham, Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions and a co-author of the declaration. "The consensus now is that the reef simply won't cope with the scale of development our governments are allowing to go ahead under the current scenario." The statement represents the united perspective of scientists from 33 Australian institutions including the University of Queensland, James Cook University and the University of Western Australia.

The release of today's document reflects the concern of the scientific community about the environmental impact of proposed coastal port development and increases in shipping and dredging in areas surrounding the reef. It asks the government to cease construction, encouraging companies to better utilise existing facilities, and to improve and regulate shipping to stop further damage to the reef.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Story also covered by:

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/scientists-rally-for-reef-20130604-2no9s.html>

GTMO volunteers help to capture and tag manatees (Cuba)

04 June 2013, *The Wire* 14(37):8-9, by Spc. Raechel Haynes

NAVFAC Environmental Specialists spent a week at Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), Cuba with the PWD folks and a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) team in an effort to tag manatees. In five days the team was able to trap four manatees and put satellite tags on three adult animals.

A large calf was caught in the channel. Although the team was unable to capture the mother, they did a full health assessment and marked the calf for future identification. The calf was quickly released and reunited with her mother.

The manatees will now be tracked via satellite providing the USGS regular updates as to the movements of the manatees. This was a great team effort for the USGS team as volunteers from GTMO volunteer team helped as spotters, boat crew, and medical crew. The USGS team will return to GTMO in October 2013 to conduct another round of tagging.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Eelgrass continues its comeback in coastal bays (VA, USA)

03 June 2013, by Tamara Dietrich, *Daily Press*

Eelgrass once thrived in Virginia's coastal bays — lush meadows of slender blades undulating just below the surface. The species of seagrass provided critical habitat to scallops, blue crabs, shrimp and other marine creatures. It trapped sediment and improved water quality. But by the 1930s, eelgrass was in trouble, devastated by a wasting disease that was slowly wiping it out. Then a powerful hurricane estimated at Category 1 strength slammed into Hampton Roads in 1933 and finished the job.

"In 1987, there wasn't one blade of grass on this entire bay," said Robert "J.J." Orth as he helmed a motorboat skimming along South Bay behind Wreck Island last week off the Eastern Shore. Orth is a marine scientist with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, or VIMS, in Gloucester Point. That was then.

Now South Bay is a rare success story in seagrass restoration, with more than 4,200 acres returned to eelgrass meadow. Every year, the meadow expands, aided by Mother Nature and a navy of volunteers. Today, VIMS' seagrass restoration project is the largest and most successful in the world, by acreage. It draws scientists and technicians from other countries to study the process and determine how it might be adapted to their own bays, rendered barren by pollutants and sediment.

full story: <http://www.dailypress.com/news/science/dp-nws-vims-seagrass-restoration-20130603,0,7451748.story>

Endangered seagrass thrives in the waters of Jervis Bay (NSW, Australia)

03 June 2013, by Jessica Long, *South Coast Register*

Seagrass found in Jervis Bay is one of the most highly regarded in the world, according to Dr Peter Macreadie, who is researching its capacity to lower carbon stocks. Jervis Bay is home to the largest and most pristine populations of

endangered seagrass known as *Posidonia australis*. Dr Macreadie said there had been a 50 per cent loss of seagrass in Australia.

Losses of the seagrass might have severe impacts on biodiversity and productivity in estuaries and near-shore environments. "There has been a major global decline in this species of seagrass. Jervis Bay has one of the largest, continuous seagrass areas in Australia. "It's so important for fisheries...using nature to capture and store carbon. "People often admire how clear the water in Jervis Bay is, not realising it is the particles released from the seagrass that keep the waters clear," said Dr Macreadie.

Wollongong University's PhD student Marie-Claire Demers is also conducting research into the seagrass and the sponges growing within the meadows, hoping it will help determine what aids the delicate balance of the seagrass's health. Jervis Bay Marine Park and Batemans Marine Park are among some of the reserves and marine parks providing protection for the species within NSW waters.

full story: <http://www.southcoastregister.com.au/story/1544891/endangered-seagrass-thrives-in-the-waters-of-jervis-bay/?cs=12>

Hundreds hunted in swan shoot (New Zealand)

02 June 2013, sunlive

Black swans are 146 fewer on Tauranga Harbour after the annual swan shoot today. Fish and Game has issued a permit to the Western Bay of Plenty Fish and Game Club to use boats to move the birds away from public areas in the harbour to an isolated bay where the shootings will take place. About 120 hunters took part. About 200 birds were killed in last years hunt.

Eastern Fish and Game regional manager Rob Pitkethley says providing this permit to assist a single large organised hunt allows for a more effective control of excessive black swan numbers in a safe and humane manner. Rob says Eastern Fish and Game Council, which manages sports fish and game birds in this region, has a responsibility to keep game bird populations to a manageable size so they don't have a detrimental effect on other natural resources or users of the harbour.

Rob says recent research shows swan populations of more than 4600 are threatening the sustainability of sea grass meadows, which are known to be important nursery habitats for juvenile snapper. He says the research shows the swan population can remove more than 30 per cent of the *Zostera* seagrass biomass annually – a critical threshold where seagrass meadows may not fully recover.

full story: <http://www.sunlive.co.nz/news/45455-hundreds-to-be-culled-swan-shoot.html>

Long Bar Pointe plans would alter appearance of Sarasota Bay (FL, USA)

02 June 2013, by Charles Schelle, Bradenton Herald

Plans to develop Long Bar Pointe are quite a change from the residential community that county commissioners approved in 2008. Today's blueprint turns the Sarasota Bayfront community into a bustling resort. A marina that could handle 100-foot boats, ripping out 20 to 40 acres of mangrove forests and dredging a canal through seagrass are all part of the new plans along Sarasota Bay and El Conquistador Parkway. Two components that would guide the project's future are up for approval Thursday by the Manatee County Commission.

The project is led by Berrington Group's Larry Lieberman, who has owned the property for 13 years, and he brought Medallion Homes' Carlos Beruff on board last year to help. Developers want a map amendment change to request mixed-use development on the property, and also want a text amendment in the county's comprehensive plan to allow more construction in the coastal and conservation elements of the plan. But environmentalist groups are already preparing to put up a fight against the proposed changes.

Staff is OK with recommending approval for the map amendment change, but the text amendment request raises red flags. "We thought it was too vague," said Planning Division Manager Doug Means. "It wasn't specific how they would accomplish this stuff." What the developers envision, Means said, is to remove 20 to 40 acres of mangroves and remove more than two acres of seagrasses for dredging to create a waterway for 100-foot-long boats to come into a canal and harbor in the upland area of the property.

full story: <http://www.bradenton.com/2013/06/02/4550732/long-bar-pointe-plans-would-alter.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>

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#bulletin>

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

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

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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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