

Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin



24 December 2014

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Abbot Point dredge spoil dump site 'worst possible' for environment, documents show (QLD, Australia)

23 December 2014, ABC Online

The Queensland Government has known for more than two years that the site where it proposes to dump millions of tonnes of dredge spoil at Abbot Point was the worst of seven possible options for port expansion from an environmental point of view. Experts working for North Queensland Bulk Ports, a government-owned corporation which operates the Abbot Point terminal, reported in September 2012 that the site west of the port where the State Government now proposes to dump the spoils offered the lowest cost option for reclamation and expansion and was nearest to the coast. But the consultants warned: "However, the West Site is considered the least desirable from an environmental and approvals perspective as it will result in the greatest impact on the Caley Valley Wetland and Cultural Heritage values of Abbot Point".

The reports, not previously made public and obtained under Right To Information, show experts considered the risks of expansion on the western site were so high it was in any case highly unlikely it would obtain Commonwealth approval. And environmental experts E3 Consult warned of "intense scrutiny from community and environmental groups" of such a plan and predicted: "The likelihood of not gaining an approval is very high. Should an approval be granted by the Commonwealth Minister, it is highly likely to be appealed, which could delay the commencement of the project."

Preparatory excavation work could begin in January. Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt is considering whether to approve a State Government plan to dump about 3 million cubic metres of dredge spoils west of the port as an alternative to a controversial plan to dispose of it at sea on the Great Barrier Reef.

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

*Story also covered by:
Yahoo!7 News*

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/25848322/abbot-point-dredge-spoil-dump-site-worst-possible-for-environment-documents-show/>

Great Barrier Reef at risk from 'rushed' sediment dumping plan at Abbot Point (QLD, Australia)

22 December 2014, The Guardian

A plan to dump dredged sediment onto a sensitive wetlands area beside the Great Barrier Reef near Abbot Point would lead to much more slurry being pumped into the waters of the reef than officially estimated, a report has warned. In its submission to the federal government, the environment group WWF cites expert advice that the project's modelling underestimates by nearly 30% the amount of sediment and water that would be discharged into the ocean through a pipe from the wetlands ponds.

A total of 1.7M cubic metres of dredged seabed will be mixed with nearly 12.5M cubic metres of seawater to create the slurry, which will be stored within ponds in Queensland's Caley Valley wetlands. The seabed is being removed in order to expand the Abbot Point port, a coal export terminal near Bowen. The ponds will be constructed near new railway lines running from Abbot Point.

Brett Miller, principal engineer of hydraulics and modelling at the University of NSW, said it would be "very difficult" to achieve the amount of discharge into the ocean estimated by the Queensland government, which has put forward the plan. The discharge would have to be nearly 30% greater to stop the ponds of sediment from overflowing into the surrounding environment, Miller states. This could have potentially significant ramifications for nearby beds of seagrass, which are a vital food source for dugongs and turtles. Dumped sediment can smother seagrass and corals, effectively killing them off in some cases.

The dumped sediment would directly wipe out 114.3 hectares of foraging habitat for birds, with a further 16.4 hectares lost due to increased activity and noise. More than 97 hectares of potential sea grass habitat would suffer "permanent and irreversible loss" from the dredging.

WWF's reef campaigner, Louise Matthiesson, said the Queensland government had underestimated the impact of the "rushed" new plan. "The sea grasses are only just recovering from cyclone damage and we can't afford to lose any more," she said. "The muddy plume from the discharge pipe would spread over a much larger area than is currently estimated. The impact of those fine sediments escaping into the ocean has been drastically underestimated.

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

Related stories:

*More laws needed to protect central Queensland wetlands near Barrier Reef, environmentalists say (ABC Online)
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-20/call-for-more-laws-to-protect-wetlands-near-great-barrier-reef/5976756>*

WWF: Reef sludge predictions way short of reality (The Australian)
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/wwf-reef-sludge-predictions-way-short-of-reality/story-e6fgr9df-1227163689889>
Protesters deliver petition demanding protection of the Great Barrier Reef from damaging ... (Fight for the Reef)
<http://fightforthereef.org.au/protesters-deliver-petition-demanding-protection-great-barrier-reef/>
WWF: Abbot Point dredge spoil underestimated (Mackay Daily Mercury)
<http://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/wwf-abbot-point-dredge-spoil-underestimated/2492689/>

Mitigation measures pointless, says NGO (Malaysia)

22 December 2014, New Straits Times Online

A Johor-based environmental organisation has raised questions over the mitigation measures proposed in the detailed environmental impact assessment (DEIA) report on the Forest City project, claiming that it would do little to save the surrounding area's flora and fauna. Non-governmental organisation Green Earth Society Johor, which aimed to promote education and create environmental awareness, said the report failed to address the issue of how to rejuvenate the fish population, saying it had been chased off their breeding ground.

Its chairman, P. Sivakumar, said the organisation had received reports from local fishermen of an 80 per cent drop in their catch. He said the destruction of seagrass would have a knock-on effect, as it was the breeding ground of marine creatures, such as dugong and seahorses, which were unique to the Johor waterway. Sivakumar questioned the amount of compensation to fishermen, saying it was unlikely that the money could sustain them for long.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Nature Society said the project developer should have undertaken the DEIA before going ahead with the reclamation. Its president, Henry Goh, said it was crucial that those behind the project took into consideration the feelings of locals, as it was an integral part of corporate social responsibility.

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

Abbot Point wetlands spoils review flooded with 80,000 submissions (QLD, Australia)

20 December 2014, The Australian

Concerns about the onshore dumping of dredge spoils from Abbot Point on wetlands and the Great Barrier Reef has prompted more than 80,000 submissions to a government review, despite a fast-tracked approvals process that allowed only 10 days for public comment. The Newman government will pass the submissions to the federal Environment Department next week. Environment Minister Greg Hunt has 40 business days to make a decision.

Expansion of the Abbot Point coal terminal is central to development of the Galilee Basin in north Queensland. The Queensland Bulk Ports Corp and the state and federal governments faced criticism over approvals to dump millions of cubic metres of dredge spoils into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The state has proposed a revised plan to use the spoils for land reclamation, despite concerns about the impact on nearby wetlands.

A spokeswoman for Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney said 80,690 submissions had been received as part of the public consultation process that closed on Thursday night. Many are expected to be pro-forma documents encouraged by environment groups that have run an international campaign against the project. North Queensland Bulk Ports has been authorised to begin dredging in March.

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

UVI Researchers Seek Help to Stop Invading Sea Grasses (US Virgin Islands)

08 December 2014, Saint Croix Source

In addition to lionfish, another invasive species is impacting the territory's waters. A seagrass with the scientific name of *Halophila stipulacea* is spreading, and University of the Virgin Islands faculty and student researchers are asking residents to report the locations, UVI said in a Monday press release.

The invasive seagrass originated in the western Indian Ocean and is thought to have spread into the Mediterranean and Caribbean seas in ship ballasts and by fragmentation caused by anchoring and other bottom disturbances. UVI faculty and students are applying research, knowledge and education in an effort to combat the problem. Marine and Environmental Sciences graduate students Sam Mitchell and Jess Keller recently wrapped up a study of the invasive seagrass as a part of the capstone project for their degrees. Their study revealed evidence that local animals eat the invasive seagrass, but the rate of consumption is not sufficient to prevent its expansion.

Native sea grasses are threatened by the invading sea grasses as they compete with the invasive species for resources and space. The fast growth rate of the invasive seagrass and its ability to regenerate from a tiny fragment enables it to rapidly establish new colonies in bare sand. Boaters are asked to avoid anchoring in seagrasses. This will limit damage to native seagrasses and encourage the growth of the nonnative sea grasses. Anyone with knowledge of the presence of the foreign seagrass *Halophila stipulacea*, please report the sighting to the UVI Center of Marine and Environmental Science at (340) 693-1380.

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

Turtles Betty and Barney released in Qld (Australia)

06 December 2014, *The West Australian*

Turtles are solitary creatures but after two years living flipper to flipper it was no surprise Betty waited for Barney when the pair were released back into the ocean. Hundreds turned out at Kurrimine Beach, south of Cairns, on Saturday morning to farewell the green turtles who have been cared for at the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre on Fitzroy Island since 2011.

Centre co-founder Jennie Gilbert says it was an emotional day. Ms Gilbert says turtles normally spend their lives alone but Barney and Betty appear to have made a connection after spending the past two years in a tank together. Both have been fitted with GPS tracking devices so researchers can follow their movements, which will hopefully give them a better chance of survival and prove whether they remain long-term buddies. Animals released by the centre have an 85 per cent survival rate.

Betty and Barney were found sick and starving - they weighed between six and 12kg - at separate beaches in the state's far north in 2011. After three years of feasting on squid they now weigh between 65-70kg and are about 25 years old. Turtles generally spend six to 12 months recovering at the rehab centre, which cares for about 40 turtles a year, but Barney and Betty were kept longer because they were so malnourished. Most are taken to the centre suffering from starvation after their normal food source, seagrass, has been destroyed by storms or coastal developments. Others are injured by boats, fishing nets or ingest rubbish.

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

Loss of sea meadows in the Lakshadweep lagoons (India)

05 December 2014, *The New Indian Express*

A study led by CMFRI principal scientist P Kaladharan showed that the loss of sea meadows in the Lakshadweep lagoons would adversely affect tuna fishery. The seagrass, which is considered to be underwater prairies, is facing severe damage in the Lakshadweep waters.

The loss is estimated to be 60-70 per cent across the five islands where the study was conducted. An immediate causality would be the bait fish used for Tuna fishing. Since the sea meadow provides habitat for reef fish, its depletion would affect them also. Excessive grazing by turtles and ecological changes due to increased anthropogenic activities are identified as the prime causes of the depletion of seagrass.

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

Abbot Point plan open for public comment (Australia)

04 December 2014, *9news.com.au*

A Queensland government plan to dump millions of cubic metres of dredged seabed on wetlands as part of a project to expand a coal port has been released for public comment. Members of the public have 10 days to make submissions on the proposal which involves reusing the dredge spoil on land at Abbot Point coal port near Bowen in the state's north. The onshore disposal project would replace an already approved plan to dump the three million cubic metres of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Public submissions will be considered by Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt, who has the final say over whether the new plan goes ahead.

Australian Marine Conservation Society spokeswoman Felicity Wishart claims authorities are trying to fast-track the plan and says 10 days isn't enough for people to consider all of the complex reports. The dredged seafloor will be dumped on the nationally significant Caley Valley Wetlands which is a natural filter for the reef and home to fish nurseries and 40,000 shore birds, she says.

Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney says documents for the Abbot Point Port and Wetlands project have been publicly available since October 3. Mining firms GVK Hancock and Adani have said they want to begin the dredging project by June, while Mr Seeney has said he's hopeful the onshore plan will be approved by the end of the year. The Abbot Point expansion is a crucial step in the development of \$28.4 billion of coal reserves in the Galilee Basin which will be shipped out of the port.

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

Related stories:

Abbot Point plan open for public comment (9news.com.au)

<http://www.9news.com.au/national/2014/12/04/15/23/abbot-point-plan-open-for-public-comment>

Australian government taken to international tribunal over Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

04 December 2014, *ABC Online*

The Australian Government's handling of the dangers facing the Great Barrier Reef will be brought before an international tribunal in Lima, Peru on Saturday. It is one of 12 cases being heard at the International Tribunal for the

Rights of Nature. Michelle Maloney, national convenor Australian Earth Laws Alliance and chair of the Environmental Defenders' Office, Queensland helped prepare the case. She said the aim was to generate a strong statement of concern from the "ethical leaders" of the Tribunal over the governments' perceived neglect of the Reef in the face of climate change, increasing development and agricultural run-off.

The International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature formed earlier this year from an alliance of nearly 100 environment and law groups. It aims to promote what it describes as "wild law", the idea that ecosystems have an intrinsic right to exist and are not simply a resource for humans. A judging panel, made up of legal, environmental and community representatives is expected to find in favour of the case, in which case they would write to the Australian and Queensland governments urging them to do more to protect the Reef. Maloney said it helps present a more complete picture of the views of the community, like when the wider community expresses dismay at a judge's sentence in a domestic abuse case, for example.

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

World's leading seagrass scientists confirm that despite conservation initiatives, all regions of the globe are experiencing seagrass habitat loss from human pollution and rapid development

03 December 2014, press release, IUCN

Seagrasses are one of the most rapidly declining ecosystems on Earth. These underwater marine coastal plants are losing 7% of their known area per year. The alarming loss of these important ecosystems was confirmed at the 11th International Seagrass Biology Workshop in Sanya, China this month, where 100 leading seagrass scientists and conservationists met to discuss and update the global status of this critical habitat. The results of seagrass research and monitoring by international scientists at the conference confirmed the global trend of continued seagrass habitat loss and degradation, driven by unsustainable practices in coastal regions including rapid development and pollution.

The Seagrass Species Specialist Group, part of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), confirmed at the China workshop that although initiatives for seagrass recovery and conservation are occurring in some areas, all regions of the globe are experiencing seagrass habitat loss from human pollution and rapid development along the world's coastlines. The assembled scientists summarized seagrass status and health from their regions of the globe.

Seagrass scientists will continue their research and advocacy across all regions of the world. They are committed to ensuring that management agencies and governments have the best information available to safeguard seagrass meadows and to slow or halt their decline – a challenge that cannot be met without global public support. The next gathering of seagrass scientists will be at the 12th International Seagrass Biology Workshop in Wales, UK in 2016. Much must be done before then to stem current seagrass habitat losses.

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

Manatees gathering near Burnt Store Rd. in Cape Coral (USA)

20 December 2014, NBC2 News

The manatee migration season has brought dozens of sea cows to Southwest Florida. But longtime Cape Coral residents say they've never seen this many along Burnt Store Road. To spot a manatee, experts say to look out for circular patterns on the water's surface -- they're called manatee footprints.

"We've never seen so many in this area before," said Cape Coral resident Lynn Sitoski. On Friday, we found at least 20 manatees mingling in the basin at the Embers Parkway intersection. Locals say it's been like this for days.

Florida Fish and Wildlife experts say while they can't confirm there are more manatees this year; they know the area near Matlacha is a manatee favorite. Once the water gets cooler, the manatees will head closer to the Fort Myers Power Plant -- an area that's warm, but lacking in food. Until then, the manatees will be enjoying the sea grass while human enjoy the view.

Full story: <http://www.nbc-2.com/story/27675680/manatees-gathering-near-burnt-store-rd-in-cape-coral>

Expert: Lawn chemicals have greatest impact on health of LI Sound (USA)

16 December 2014, MinuteMan News Centre

Recent research has demonstrated that the bays and harbors of Long Island Sound are being impacted by water quality problems—specifically nitrogen pollution, which has been a problem for decades. This research is showing that that the major sources of nitrogen pollution vary from one bay to the next. Chantal Collier, director The Nature Conservancy's Long Island Sound Program, talked at Earthplace in Westport Thursday night about how excessive nutrients in the form of nitrogen has resulted in massive destruction of seagrass and shoreline habitats.

Originally, she said, in the 1950's and 60's the condition was mostly attributed to industrial discharge and sewage. The burning of fossil fuel remains a source of impact, of course, as do other things that are known as "point sources," she said, particular spots such as at the end of waste water pipes that are discharging from sewage treatment plants. Other, harder to identify non-point sources, however, including fertilizers, pet waste that it carried through run off, septic systems and various agricultural activities, have been making the situation worse.

Interestingly, different sections of the Sound are impacted by vastly different percentages of this group of causes. For instance, nearly half the cause of all excess nitrogen in the lower Saugatuck River — 49 percent to be exact — comes from septic systems, and 31 percent is due to sewage treatment plants. But over 10 percent of this area's comes from fertilizers used on lawns and golf course — 4 percent and 7 percent respectively. Collier said that The Nature Conservancy has tried to focus on three areas where Long Island Sound is concerned — salt marsh monitoring and research, restoring shellfish, and seagrass research to understand why there has been such a drastic decline, with over 90 percent of Long Island Sound's seagrass having disappeared in recent years. Collier ended her talk on a positive note, however, sharing how in Tampa Bay, Florida, the community took measures to bring back its waterways by concentrating on reducing the excess nitrogen that was introduced into the water.

Full story: <http://www.minutemannewscenter.com/articles/2014/12/16/fairfield/news/doc54885253ae0b3386477963.txt?viewmode=fullstory>

*Story also covered by:
Minuteman News Center*

<http://www.minutemannewscenter.com/articles/2014/12/10/westport/news/doc548851d4093be850691958.txt?viewmode=fullstory>

Turtle dies in crab trap on Wooloweyah (Australia)

15 December 2014, Northern Star

The sad discovery of a marine turtle dead in a crab trap at Lake Wooloweyah has prompted a reminder to fishers of their responsibility to check their traps regularly to help prevent drowning of these marine creatures, listed under the Threatened Species Conservation 1995. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Clarence South area manager Andrew Lugg said the turtle, still in the trap, was discovered on Tuesday (9/12) by Clarence Valley Council staff undertaking weed control work along the edge of the Lake.

DPI Acting Director Recreational Fisheries Cameron Westaway said that reducing the soak time by checking traps regularly will also reduce the probability of air-breathing animals (such as turtles) drowning. "NSW DPI recommends that fishers use crab traps that have small entrances or funnels to prevent turtles being able to enter the trap," Mr Westaway said. "We also encourage people to follow advice on the NSW DPI website which recommends using rectangular, open ended collapsible crab traps which can be easily modified to prevent turtles from entering by reducing the entrance size using a cable tie, piece of wire or similar."

Full story: <http://www.northernstar.com.au/news/turtle-dies-in-crab-trap-on-wooloweyah/2484445/>

CQU lecturer delivers talk on seagrass in New Caledonia (Australia)

13 December 2014, Toowoomba Chronicle

Central Queensland University's Dr Andrew Irving was one of the faces who represented CQU in New Caledonia. The Senior lecturer in Ecology specialises in marine biology and has recently returned from the Society of Ecological Restoration Australasian Chapter where he was invited to talk about the current research he has been conducting on Seagrass rehabilitation and restoration.

Dr Irving said the CQ and Gladstone region had a large area of seagrass that had recently been suffering due to the increased lack of lighting and the damage by human activity. "Humans like to build ports and houses in those types of areas so there's a bit of a conflict there because we both want to share those habitats. The overall picture of seagrass is that it's declining around the world, we've lost a third of seagrass around the world and that figure will continue to increase if we don't change the attitude towards seagrass and the natural habitat."

Full story: <http://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/cqu-lecturer-delivers-talk-on-seagrass/2474480/>

Greens call for public release of submissions for 35-year Great Barrier Reef plan (Australia)

11 December 2014, ABC Online

There are growing concerns that the Federal Government has not yet publicly released the submissions for its 35-year draft plan for the Great Barrier Reef. The Federal Government received more than 1,000 submissions from around the country for its Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, which was released in September and was widely criticised for not banning the dumping of dredge spoil into the marine park.

Interest groups had until the end of October to make submissions to improve the plan, which will be considered by UNESCO's world heritage committee next year when it decides whether to list the reef as a World Heritage area in danger. But the Government still had not published them on the Environment Department website six weeks after the submission deadline.

Given the worldwide interest, Queensland Greens Senator Larissa Waters said it was crucial that the Government release the submissions publicly for review. But a spokeswoman for Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt said the Government was reviewing all of the submissions, and once that was completed the changes would be incorporated into the plan and published online. The Australian Marine Conservation Society has also called on the Federal Government to publish the submissions. The spokeswoman for Mr Hunt did not give a timeframe for how long it would take for the changes to be incorporated into the plan and published online, only that it would occur in coming weeks.

Full story: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-11/greens-want-submissions-on-barrier-reef-sustainability-released/5959396>

Court Hearing, Press Conference Target US Military Airstrip in Japan Threatening Okinawa Dugongs (USA)

10 December 2014, Center for Biological Diversity

A hearing in a historic lawsuit brought by American and Japanese conservation groups to halt construction of a controversial U.S. military airstrip in Okinawa, Japan will be held Thursday in U.S. District Court in San Francisco. The airstrip would pave over some of the last remaining habitat for endangered Okinawa dugongs, gentle marine mammals related to manatees. The 1:30 p.m. hearing will be preceded by a press conference at 12:30 p.m. with plaintiffs, conservation groups and a delegation from Okinawa, Japan.

In July conservation groups filed a lawsuit, supplemental to a 2003 suit, seeking to require the U.S. Department of Defense to stop construction activities on the new U.S. Marine base airstrip at Henoko Bay until it conducts an in-depth analysis aimed at avoiding or mitigating harm the expansion will cause for the Okinawa dugong. The Japanese Ministry of the Environment lists dugongs as "critically endangered," and the animals are also on the U.S. endangered species list. In 1997 it was estimated that there might be as few as 50 Okinawa dugongs left in the world; more recent surveys have only been able to conclude that at least three dugongs remain in Okinawa. Although the Defense Department acknowledges that this information is "not sufficient," and despite the precariously low dugong population even under the most conservative estimates, the Defense Department has authorized construction of the new base.

The lawsuit was filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the U.S. organizations Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network; the Japanese organizations Japan Environmental Lawyers Federation and the Save the Dugong Foundation; and three Japanese individuals.

Full story: http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2014/okinawa-dugong-12-10-2014.html

Bermuda Creates Plan to Manage Sea Turtle Population (Bermuda)

10 December 2014, Caribbean Journal

Bermuda's Department of Conservation Services has announced the completion of a management plan to deal with the conservation of the island's resident green and hawksbill turtle populations. The main aim of the plan is to "protect the species and their habitats and to contribute to national, regional, and global conservation efforts for marine turtles through knowledge-sharing and participation in international agreements," according to a government statement.

Sea turtles face threats from a number of human activities, from collision with boats and jet skis, to incidental catch from fishing activities and the loss of seagrass habitat.

The new plan includes several recommendations, including increasing the number of international agreements signed by Bermuda regarding sea turtle management; increasing education regarding human threats toward sea turtles and making an accurate assessment of the current population status of both species.

Full story: <http://www.caribjournal.com/2014/12/10/bermuda-creates-plan-to-manage-sea-turtle-population/>

Story also covered by:

Bermuda implements plan to protect 2 turtle species (Fox News Latino)

<http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/news/2014/12/11/bermuda-implements-plan-to-protect-2-turtle-species/>

Qld govt data says reef is healthy (Australia)

11 December 2014, The Land Newspaper

Gladstone Harbour, one of Australia's largest export ports, was labelled a "toxic wasteland" in 2011 by environmentalists who said dredging had de-destroyed the local seafood industry. Today, the sea life in Gladstone Harbour is in good health. There are record harvests of its famous banana prawns and mud crabs and local seagrass is re-covering from one of the main culprits of environmental damage: the 2011 floods, not the \$1.4 billion dredging program, Queensland Department of Agriculture data shows.

Dr Ian Poiner, the former head of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, who heads the independent scientific panel of the Gladstone Health Harbour Partnership, said it was inaccurate to use language like "toxic wasteland" to

describe the harbour. He said a pilot program for the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership released last week had given the harbour a satisfactory rating.

Senator Waters said a Senate majority report had described an "environmental disaster" in the Port and independent research had found that dredging contributed to this.

Full story: <http://www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/general/news/qld-govt-data-says-reef-is-healthy/2719420.aspx?storypage=0>

Green sea turtle found dead off Waikiki (USA)

08 December 2014, KHON2

Officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are investigating the death of a green sea turtle found off Waikiki Monday morning. Several kayakers spotted the large, 220-pound male turtle stranded on rocks in the water and brought it to shore. Officials say the turtle did not show any obvious signs of injury. He was taken to NOAA's facility on Ford Island where a necropsy was conducted, but his cause of death could not be determined, officials said.

They've found in recent years that human interaction is having a huge impact on Hawaii's turtle population. Strandings occur when marine mammals or sea turtles swim or float into shore and become "beached" or stuck in shallow water. Officials say on average, they see about 300 turtle strandings a year and about half of those are dead. If you spot a stranded animal, call NOAA's hotline at (808) 725-5730.

Full story: <http://khon2.com/2014/12/08/green-sea-turtle-found-dead-off-waikiki/>

New National Environmental Research Program to be based in Cairns (Australia)

09 December 2014, Newsport Daily

The Australian Government is investing more than \$31 million over six years for research into tropical water quality through the National Environmental Science Programme. The research will assist in the management of coastal and marine water quality in Australia's tropical regions, including the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef.

Subject to successful contract negotiations, the Government has selected the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre to lead the Tropical Water Quality Hub in partnership with a team of high calibre researchers from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, four universities and CSIRO. The hub would be led by Professor Hurriyet Babacan, a recognised international scholar, who was awarded the Order of Australia this year for academic contribution to community life and policy change. The research partners involved have an impressive track record of delivering practical science that has informed the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014, the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan, Crown of Thorns Starfish management, and Synthesis Report on dredging impacts on the reef.

The Tropical Water Quality Hub is part of the National Environmental Science Programme – a competitive merit-based programme with six research hubs. The Government is providing \$142.5 million to give certainty to researchers so that science programmes can be planned and completed in a way which ensures flexibility and alignment with current environmental policy needs. This research will ensure decisions about managing Australia's biodiversity and environmental resources are made on the best available information.

Full story: <http://www.tourismportdouglas.com.au/New-National-Environmental-Science-Progr.12124.0.html>

*Story also covered by:
Fraser Coast Chronicle*

<http://www.frasercoastchronicle.com.au/news/millions-be-invested-tropical-water-quality-resear/2488319/>

Bundaberg News Mail

<http://www.news-mail.com.au/news/millions-be-invested-tropical-water-quality-resear/2488319/>

Related stories

Water quality research welcomed (Whitsunday Times)

<http://www.whitsundaytimes.com.au/news/water-quality-research-welcomed/2481069/>

CQuni to help track Great Barrier Reef water (Rockhampton Morning Bulletin)

<http://www.themorningbulletin.com.au/news/cquni-to-track-great-barrier-reef-water/2479023/>

Another international bank dumps Queensland's mine, rail and port expansion that threatens Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

08 December 2014, Fight for the Reef

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) has welcomed Societe Generale's decision to withdraw involvement in the Alpha coal mine, putting investment in port and rail infrastructure at Abbot Point in doubt. Felicity Wishart, AMCS Great Barrier Reef campaign director said a lack of investor confidence in this and other port expansions is growing because they won't make money and they risk damaging the world heritage listed Great Barrier Reef.

Full story: <https://fightforthereef.org.au/another-international-bank-dumps-queenslands-mine-rail-port-expansion-threatens-great-barrier-reef/>

Julie Bishop lobbies nations with heritage sites to block Great Barrier Reef danger call (Australia)

09 December 2014, Courier Mail

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop will declare the Great Barrier Reef is not "in danger" as she today heads off an international push to blacklist the national icon. Ms Bishop will warn world leaders to back off, arguing a push to list the Australian icon will put their own heritage sites in the firing line. The Foreign Minister believes a successful ruling against Australia would set a precedent activists will use to list key world heritage sites across the world.

In a bid to prevent UNESCO's World Heritage Committee declaring the Reef "in danger" next year, Ms Bishop plans to lobby each country on the committee that the ruling would set a precedent for their own nations. Ms Bishop will hold meetings with other world leaders on the sidelines of a climate change summit which begins in Lima, Peru today.

Ms Bishop will argue Australia has provided a "textbook case" on how to address environmental threats with its policies to protect the Reef and should not be punished by an "in danger" ruling that would have "significant implications" for Queensland's tourism, coastal development and mining.

Full story: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/julie-bishop-lobbies-nations-with-heritage-sites-to-block-great-barrier-reef-danger-call/story-fnn8dlfs-1227149225447?nk=562caf24377cf96bc7fb459ce3de02f8>

Related stories

The big myth Bishop is telling us (NEWS.com.au)

<http://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/julie-bishop-will-use-climate-talks-in-peru-to-argue-great-barrier-reef-is-not-in-danger/story-fnjwvztl-1227149615549>

Bishop accused of scare tactics on Reef (Yahoo!7 News)

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/25719560/bishop-accused-of-scare-tactics-on-reef/>

Julie Bishop steps up lobbying to stop Great Barrier Reef being listed 'in danger' (The Guardian)

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/dec/09/julie-bishop-lobbying-stop-great-barrier-reef-listed-in-danger>

Bishop accused of scare tactics on Reef (Sky News Australia)

<http://www.skynews.com.au/news/national/2014/12/09/bishop-accused-of-scare-tactics-on-reef.html>

Bishop urges UNESCO not to declare Reef in danger (The Sunshine Coast Daily)

<http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/bishop-urges-unesco-not-to-declare-reef-danger/2480010/>

Dugong for Christmas dinner (QLD, Australia)

08 December 2014, ABC Local

The Star of the Sea Elders Village on Thursday Island has issued a public invitation to their residents' Christmas party this weekend. For \$5, guests can eat dugong and turtle, with the funds raised to go towards residents' activities. But Colin Riddell from the Bob Irwin Conservation Foundation says it is a disgrace.

"I can't believe it's on a Christmas party menu for a public invitation for \$5 to go in there and eat vulnerable, endangered animals," he said. "This is Australia in 2014, it's not 1814 or 1914, and there are supermarkets on all of the islands." Mr Riddell says it is a backwards step and a blow to turtle and dugong conservation.

Leichhardt MP Warren Entsch, who is campaigning for a ban on traditional hunting in Great Barrier Reef green zones, says he does not have a problem with it. "These are all traditional island foods and these elderly residents would've grown up on these types of foods," he said. "In that circumstance, I have no issue with it whatsoever and good on the families that are making the effort to make their Christmas so special." BlueCare, which manages the home, says the meat is supplied by the resident's family at their request.

Full story: <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/12/08/4144372.htm?site=farnorth>

Online protest against Adani's Oz coal project (India)

08 December 2014, Ahmedabad Mirror

A massive online protest is gathering steam to convince the State Bank of India (SBI) to renege on its billion-dollar loan to Adani to build a coal port near the Great Barrier Reef. Following public pressure, Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan, Goldman, HSBC, Citibank and Morgan Stanley had reportedly refused to fund the project in Australia. Avaaz, a petition website, has taken the onus of garnering support against the project, hoping SBI will change its mind.

SBI had recently said that it had only signed a preliminary MoU and will disburse the money only after proper due diligence.

Full story: <http://www.ahmedabadmirror.com/ahmedabad/others/Online-protest-against-Adanis-Oz-coal-project/articleshow/45406976.cms>

Sebastian Inlet flounder run sputters (FL, USA)

07 December 2014, Florida Today

Sebastian Inlet's annual flounder run has started out as little more than a slow trot, but inlet regulars who wait all year for the migration of the bottom-hugging "flatties" are hopeful for greater numbers in the coming weeks. It's usually around Thanksgiving when the first cold fronts chill the Central Florida water temperatures that the larger Southern flounder begin moving out of the Indian River Lagoon and through Sebastian on their trek to offshore spawning grounds. It's a migration that usually lasts through December and into early January.

Richard Patton of Sebastian has been catching inlet flounder since the 1960s, and while he believes cold weather gets them up and moving, he feels a more concerning factor is the widespread die-off of seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon. "A little grass is coming back, but for the most part, it's gone in the shallows where flounder feed, so there's no place for them to go," Patton said. "I've been seeing a lot of changes since the grass died out, and the lack of flounder is one of them."

Full story: <http://www.floridatoday.com/story/sports/outdoors/bill-sargent/2014/12/06/sports-outdoors-bill-sargent/20018197/>

Algae in Kochi Waters Could be a Source of Green Fuel (India)

05 December 2014, Express News Service

Prymnesium parvum, micro-algae seen in the waters of Kochi, has a huge potential to be used for producing bio-diesel. This was revealed by researcher Sanyo Sabu, who is working at the Cochin University of Science and Technology (Cusat), Kochi. She presented her findings at a technical session on 'Marine Bio-diversity, Climate Change and Ecosystem Assessment' at MECOS2, an international conference organised by the Marine Biological Association of India (MBAI), on Thursday. The meet was chaired by KUFOS VC Madhusoodana Kurup. The experiments conducted by Sanyo, under the guidance of I S Bright Singh, revealed that *Prymnesium Parvum* was ideal for bio-diesel production as it satisfies the ASTM standards - the international norms set for bio-diesel production from algae.

Meanwhile, a study led by CMFRI principal scientist P Kaladharan showed that the loss of sea meadows in the Lakshadweep lagoons would adversely affect tuna fishery. The seagrass, which is considered to be underwater prairies, is facing severe damage in the Lakshadweep waters. The loss is estimated to be 60-70 per cent across the five islands where the study was conducted. An immediate causality would be the bait fish used for Tuna fishing. Since the sea meadow provides habitat for reef fish, its depletion would affect them also. Excessive grazing by turtles and ecological changes due to increased anthropogenic activities are identified as the prime causes of the depletion of seagrass.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/Algae-in-Kochi-Waters-Could-be-a-Source-of-Green-Fuel/2014/12/05/article2555757.ece>

GALLERY

Roebuck Bay, WA (Australia): 08 - 10 December 2014 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Urangan, Hervey Bay, QLD (Australia): 05 - 06 December 2014 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Cairns, Qld (Australia): Level 1: 02 - 03 December 2014 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

CONFERENCES

Coastal & Estuarine Research Federation 23rd Biennial Conference (CERF2015) (Portland, Oregon, USA, 8-12 November 2015)

Theme: Grand Challenges in Estuarine and Coastal Science: Securing our Future

The CERF 2015 scientific program offers four days of timely, exciting and diverse information on a vast array of estuarine and coastal subjects. Presentations will examine new findings within CERF's traditional scientific, education and management disciplines and encourage interaction among coastal and estuarine scientists and managers. Additionally, the Scientific Program Committee plans to convene special sessions and workshops that promote intellectually stimulating discussions of the Grand Challenges in Coastal and Estuarine Science:

Managing and mitigating the risks of climate change – *shifts in precipitation and hydrologic patterns; wetland and species migrations; sea level rise; drought and water scarcity; severe storms, etc.*

Synergistic effects of ocean acidification with hypoxia, eutrophication or other conditions – *synthesis of information (e.g., from 2013 CERF) with new research results and methods for mitigating effects*

Polar estuaries and coasts – *physical oceanography, ice cover, biogeochemical interactions and impacts to coastal ecosystems*

Making data work – *advancement, management and integration of modern datasets (observing, genomics, bioinformatics) and capabilities to yield predictive models and tools*

Cities by the sea – *scientific exploration of dense and growing populations, economies and the built environment on coastal ecosystems; success stories from green infrastructure*
Estuaries under threat – *environmental change and variability associated with population growth, resource acquisition and scarcity, war/conflict, biodiversity loss and interactions in the next 50 years*
Multiple uses – *managing multiple, conflicting uses of coastal resources across the natural and sociological continuum; integration, quantification and valuation of ecosystem goods and services*

The Scientific Program Committee for CERF's 23rd Biennial Conference is now accepting proposals for scientific sessions and workshops. Ideas for topics and speakers will be accepted through 12 September 2014. Proposals will only be accepted online. A formal Call for Scientific Sessions and Workshop Proposals is now posted on the CERF website. Some examples include:

- managing and mitigating the risks of climate change;
- synergistic effects of ocean acidification with hypoxia, eutrophication or other conditions;
- polar estuaries and coasts;
- making data work;
- cities by the sea;
- estuaries under threat; and
- multiple uses of coastal resources.

CERF 2015 sessions will include oral, poster and combined oral/poster formats. Those making submissions should be prepared to either act as a convener or chair of the session/workshop they are proposing, or identify an appropriate chair.

for more information, visit <http://www.erf.org/cerf2015>

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 35,524 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>

Virtual Herbarium <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/herbarium.html>

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.