



31 July 2014

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Singapore's seagrass meadows at risk from reclamation (Singapore)

12 July 2014, by David Ee, *The Straits Times*

Land reclamation is putting Singapore at risk of losing all of its seagrass meadows - lush, underwater "gardens" of the only flowering plants that live in the sea.

A National University of Singapore (NUS) study has found that filling the island's coastal waters with sand over the almost five decades since independence has killed 1.6 sq km of seagrass - nearly half of the country's total. Dredging and reclamation works either bury it or cloud the water with sediment, blocking out the sunlight that it needs to thrive.

"One of the main threats to seagrasses is declining water quality," said marine ecologist Siti Maryam Yaakub, who recently graduated after carrying out the four-year study as a PhD student.

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

Amendments Expected For Forest City (Johor, Malaysia)

30 June 2014, *New Straits Times*, malaysiandigest.com

Several major amendments to the original plan for the controversial Forest City project along the Johor Straits are expected as pressure mounts from environmental non-governmental organisations and concerns from Singapore. The changes were proposed by Kuala Lumpur-based Asian Environmental Solutions Sdn Bhd (AES), which was appointed by project developer Country Garden Sdn Bhd to prepare a preliminary environmental impact assessment (EIA) report for the mammoth project. The proposed changes are aimed at cushioning the impact of the reclamation project on the surrounding environment.

In the preliminary report, one of the major changes proposed was to build two parallel water channels cutting across the island, created by reclamation work, almost in the shape of a right angle isosceles triangle. The water channels, which will form part of the waterfront features, will also be parallel to the Johor Straits to encourage water flow. A source close to the company told the *New Straits Times* that the changes were aimed at making the project more friendly to the Johor Straits, which separates Malaysia and Singapore.

Another proposal was to replant seagrass, since a lot of it had been destroyed following the reclamation work. However, environmental NGOs doubted the effectiveness of replanting works, especially when the replanting zone was fronting the open sea. A Malaysian Nature Society spokesman, who did not want to be named, said the survival rate of seagrass replanting was 10 per cent.

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

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<http://www.bernama.com.my/bernama/v7/ge/newsgeneral.php?id=1051912>

Lawsuit Seeks to Halt Construction of U.S. Military Airstrip in Japan That Would Destroy Habitat of Endangered Okinawa Dugongs (CA, USA)

31 July 2014, *eNews Park Forest*

American and Japanese conservation groups today asked a U.S. federal court to halt construction of a U.S. military airstrip in Okinawa, Japan that would pave over some of the last remaining habitat for endangered Okinawa dugongs, ancient cultural icons for the Okinawan people. The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, is the latest in a long-running controversy over the expansion of a U.S. Marine air base at Okinawa's Henoko Bay. Preliminary construction on the base began earlier this year.

Dugongs are gentle marine mammals related to manatees that have long been revered by native Okinawans, even celebrated as "sirens" that bring friendly warnings of tsunamis. The dugong is listed as an object of national cultural significance under Japan's Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, the equivalent of the U.S. National Historic Protection Act. Under this act and international law, the United States must take into account the effect of its actions and avoid or mitigate any harm to places or things of cultural significance to another country. The Nature Conservation Society of Japan reported earlier this month that it had found more than 110 locations around the site of the proposed airstrips where dugongs had fed on seagrass this spring and summer.

Today's legal filing, which supplements a suit filed in 2003, seeks to require the U.S. Department of Defense to stop construction activities on the new airstrip until it conducts an in-depth analysis aimed at avoiding or mitigating harm the expansion will cause for the Okinawa dugong. In April 2014, the Defense Department concluded that its activities would not harm the dugong, but that conclusion did not consider all possible effects of the new airstrip and ignored important facts. In addition, the department excluded the public, including local dugong experts, from its analysis. Today's 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://enewspf.com/latest-news/science/science-a-environmental/54424-lawsuit-seeks-to-halt-construction-of-u-s-military-airstrip-in-japan-that-would-destroy-habitat-of-endangered-okinawa-dugongs.html>

Lurking red tide bloom generates gloomy outlook (FL, USA)

30 July 2014, by Chad Gillis, *The News-Press*

The largest red tide bloom recorded in Florida waters since 2006 is lingering in the Gulf of Mexico and could move south over the next few days. Red tide, caused here by *Karenia brevis*, can cause fish kills, make shellfish unsafe to eat and cause respiratory issues in marine mammals, sea turtles and humans. Thousands of dead fish were reported late last week about 40 miles off Hernando County, where the bloom stretches 80 miles north to south. Upward of 236 manatees were killed in Lee County waters by a red tide outbreak in 2013 — causes of death for some animals was undetermined but thought to be related to the red tide bloom.

Predicting when and if the 4,000 square mile bloom will move into Southwest Florida waters is impossible, but water quality scientists say the region is ripe for an algae outbreak. Scientists with the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation tested the salinity, chlorophyll and turbidity of the water Tuesday at the Sanibel Causeway, looking for clues.

Algae feeds on nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, and heavy loads of those nutrients were flowing through the Caloosahatchee River and coastal bays and beaches last summer as the region experienced record rainfall coupled with Lake Okeechobee releases. "Right now nutrient levels are elevated and will probably support *Karenia* because of the *Lyngbya* that's here," said water quality scientist Rick Bartleson, with the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation. *Lyngbya* is a form of cyanobacteria found in the tropics and subtropics that's known to cling to certain sea grasses, forming a shiny clump of fiberlike hairs. *Lyngbya* can choke off oxygen from seagrass roots, killing the grasses and lifting them from the bottom of bays and estuaries.

full story: <http://www.news-press.com/story/life/outdoors/2014/07/30/lurking-red-tide-bloom-generates-gloomy-outlook/13344833/>

Federal and State governments to defend reef plan in Senate (QLD, Australia)

20 July 2014, *Central Queensland News*

The Federal and Queensland governments will put their case that they are improving the management of the Great Barrier Reef in the first hearing of a Senate inquiry on the reef on Monday. Bureaucrats from both governments will speak to the inquiry in Brisbane on Monday; among other stakeholders including the seafood, mining and ports industries and environmentalists. It will be the first of three hearings held across Queensland this week, after a hearing originally scheduled for Gladstone was cancelled due to time constraints for the committee.

In a sign that the state and federal governments are collaborating on the reef's management, they have put together a joint submission arguing much has already been achieved. One of more than 40 submissions to the inquiry, both government argue they "have made and continue to make, substantial investment and commitment to the protection" of the reef. The document outlines limited progress on the World Heritage Committee's recommendations, including the "finalisation" of the strategic assessment of the reef and release of a water quality report card.

But the submission does not detail how funding cuts at both levels of government have affected the Reef Rescue program, or the resignation or retrenchment of several senior staff have affected the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

full story: <http://www.cqnews.com.au/news/apn-newsdeskthe-federal-and-queensland-governments/2323739/>

Sea cow fossil found along Orange County toll road (CA, USA)

18 July 2014, by Marc Cota-Robles, *KABC-TV*

It's been a tedious task for a crew of paleontologists. They got the call from Caltrans when its crew installing a system of smart sprinkler controllers made a unique find in Laguna Niguel. An ancient fossil, between 5 to 7 million years old, located along the 73 toll road in south Orange County in what's known as the Capistrano Formation.

Paleontologists from San Diego's Natural History Museum say they're almost certain it's the fossil of a sea cow, which belongs to a group of animals that includes the dugong. The dugong still lives to this day in the warm coastal waters of the Indian Ocean. "It appeared to be 7 or 8 feet long and a couple of feet thick," said Caltrans spokesman David Richardson. But this, Richardson says, is said to be one of the first specimen of its kind, fully intact, found in the area, which created a bit of a challenge.

full story: <http://abc7.com/news/sea-cow-fossil-found-along-orange-county-toll-road-/199945/>

Camp gives kids a chance to learn marine biology (FL, USA)

16 July 2014, by Patricia Potestad, Palm Beach Post

Identifying different fish species and conducting seagrass surveys might seem like a job for scientists, but kids at MacArthur Beach State Park's Marine Biology Camp get to play scientist every day. During the weeklong camp, kids learn about environmental preservation and different marine plants and animals. They learn what marine biologists go through to conduct observations and they get to kayak, swim and snorkel to conduct observations of their own.

full story: <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/local/camp-gives-kids-a-chance-to-learn-marine-biology/nggx/C/>

Underwater meadows might serve as antacid for acid seas (CA, USA)

15 July 2014, ideastream

The world's oceans are changing — chemically changing. As people put more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the oceans absorb more of it, and that's making the water more acidic. The effects are subtle in most places, but scientists say that if this continues, it could be a disaster for marine life. Kristy Kroeker, a marine biologist at the University of California, recently reviewed 228 studies of ocean acidification and says there's a lot of variety in how marine organisms respond to acidity. Some do OK, others don't. It has led scientists to find out which plants and animals are the hardiest, and how to protect those that aren't. In California they've found nearly ideal places to do that: the nation's largest network of coastal reserves. There are 124 protected marine areas along the California coast. Some hug the shore, and some are miles out to sea. You can't drill or develop in any of them, and you can't fish in about half of them.

This summer, a group of scientists from the University of California, Santa Barbara selected a protected area for acidification research. They're focusing on the region around Santa Cruz Island, which is surrounded by several protected areas. Why this island? Because the underground meadows of seagrass here (also called eel grass), do something very curious: They seem able to neutralize acidity. The scientists hope the meadows could be refuges for sea life trying to escape acidic water.

The project is what scientists call "laying the groundwork." Measurements taken above the underwater meadows should show whether the grasses are sufficiently able to raise the pH (i.e., reduce the acidity) of the water. Team leader Gretchen Hofmann says there's a lot at stake. Even if all the open oceans are vulnerable, she says, some regions along coastlines might be defensible. "We want to do something to protect our backyard, our part of the ocean," she says. "And we are realizing that if these beds of eel grass are good and that they buffer future changes in acidity, we should be protecting them, or maybe even restoring them."

full story: <http://www.ideastream.org/news/npr/330440072>

Assessments Claim Damage From Nygard Cay Dredging (Bahamas)

15 July 2014, Bahamas Tribune

Dredging at Nygard Cay has had negative effects on the environment, according to a series of environmental impact assessments carried out in the area. Opponents of the development claim these reports contradict Peter Nygard's statements published in The Tribune yesterday that his activities show no adverse effects.

According to reports prepared by the independent professionals who have studied the works, the construction and existence of those other groynes and the dredging continues to cause damage to the seabed and seagrass, disturbing and potentially destroying habitat for marine life in Clifton Bay and starving the downdraft beaches to the east of sand and accelerating erosion along those beach fronts. An environmental incident report on August 9, 2005, found "dredging that took place before 2005 caused physical damage and destruction to about 6,000 square metres of sea grass beds with as much as 12,000 cubic metres of fill sand removed from West Bay".

In addition, a 2005 Coastal Incident Report describes the dredging as pumping sand onshore where it is trapped by the artificial reefs and notes that when dredging, "no sediment curtain was used and massive destruction to the near shore seagrass occurred in a large area". A 2011 University of Miami Sea Floor Report records that as a result of the groyne-building and dredging Clifton Cay is left with "large holes and devastated sea beds which are littered with plastic debris, steel wires, rock debris, bottles, cinder blocks, PVC pipe fragments, etc".

full story: <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2014/jul/15/assessments-claim-damage-nygard-cay-dredging/>

Deal to study dugongs in Qatari coastal waters (Qatar)

14 July 2014, Peninsula On-line

ExxonMobil Research Qatar (EMRQ), Qatar University (QU) and Texas A&M at Galveston (TAMUG) have signed a tri-party agreement to further environmental research and marine mammal initiatives relevant to Qatar. EMRQ will provide TAMUG and QU with funding and technical assistance to increase understanding of the dugong population in Qatar's coastal waters.

Qatar is home to the largest population of dugongs outside Australia, with two of the three most important regions in Arabian Gulf. Dugongs in Qatar face challenges, including incidental fishing and habitat degradation. The project aims to develop the scientific understanding to inform environmental conservation decisions for dugongs. The program will begin by completing three research objectives: Conducting beach surveys to characterise numbers, sex, size classes, and causes of stranded dugongs; determining age of dugongs by histological processing of tusks collected from stranded animals and integrating age data with stranding data to obtain age-specific population parameters; and interviewing fishermen to locate and estimate dugong numbers in preparation for future aerial surveys.

full story: <http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/291475/deal-to-study-dugongs-in-qatari-coastal-waters>

related articles:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/qatar/178/details/400459/deal-to-boost-research-into-dugong-population>

How supercomputers are helping save endangered species (USA)

11 July 2014, by Becky Ferreira, Motherboard

It's always exciting when ecological conservation gets a techie boost, and that's exactly what is happening at the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC). The SDSC has partnered with the US Geological Survey and the San Diego Zoo to track the range of three endangered species in 3D using the center's supercomputers. The team published their results in PLOS One this month.

The result is a dramatically improved method for tracking threatened wildlife. One immediate benefit of using such a powerful setup is the reduced processing time. But beyond the quick turnaround, the partnership's 3D models provide researchers with a much more detailed picture of the migratory patterns of terrestrial, avian, and aquatic animals. The team selected three species representing land (giant pandas), air (California condors), and ocean terrain (dugongs, a close relative of the manatee) to track with movement-based kernel density estimators (MKDEs), which collectively are one method of modeling how species move throughout habitats, which provides crucial data for conservation efforts.

Of course, there are also many practical applications for the maps. "If you wanted to find out where condor home ranges intersect with planned turbine sites using traditional 2D analysis, you just stack the two maps and pick out areas that overlap," said co-author James Sheppard of the San Diego Zoo in the USGS post. The same logic applies to the vertical movements of dugongs, pandas, and whatever other species get hooked up with MKDEs. Accordingly, the same preventative measures can be taken by industries and activities that encroach on their habitat. It's a fascinating result, and should the technology get deployed further, data-driven conservation could have a big impact.

full story: <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/how-supercomputers-are-helping-save-endangered-species>

Impact offset fund for spoil dumping on reef is \$98m short (QLD, Australia)

11 July 2014, Daniel Burdon, Rockhampton Morning Bulletin

Money so far set aside to offset the potential impacts of dumping three million cubic metres of dredged spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park may be more than \$98 million short, internal government documents have revealed. The internal marine park authority documents reveal senior staff at the authority believed the cost of offsetting the effects of the dumping of the spoil would cost in the realm of \$100 million.

Other documents also released earlier this year through a Senate Order for the Production of Documents, estimate the cost could be as high as \$200 million, despite no official cost benefit analysis being released to date. The offsets were made as part of approval conditions on the sea dumping application from North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation for the port expansion, to help offset and mitigate effects on water quality.

Environment Minister Greg Hunt had previously put conditions on it that 150% of the project's effects on water quality effects be offset. But the documents show the port's estimates were set at just \$2 million, a far cry from the cost the authority had calculated. It is understood the port may increase the amount set aside to deal with the proposed offset program, but a specific figure was subject to internal negotiations.

full story: <http://www.themorningbulletin.com.au/news/Impact-offset-fund-for-spoil-dumping-on-reef-short/2316467/>

related articles:

<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2014/07/14/offsetting-dredging-in-the-great-barrier-reef-would-cost-1bn/>

<http://www.sandandgravel.com/news/article.asp?v1=18605>

<http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20140716100418562>

More evidence for endangered dugongs found at planned Okinawa base relocation site (Japan)

10 July 2014, By Keisuke Katori, The Asahi Shimbun

A leading environmental group has found extensive evidence that endangered dugongs inhabit waters close to the planned relocation site of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture. The finding is sharply at odds with a report by the Defense Ministry, which is responsible for the work to move the facility from densely

populated Ginowan to the Henoko district in Nago. The Nature Conservation Society of Japan said the sea mammals were found to have been feeding on seaweed between May and July at more than 110 locations around Henoko.

An environmental impact assessment report released by the Defense Ministry in 2012 concluded there is only a low possibility that dugongs would forage for seaweed in waters near Henoko. A boring survey to drill into the seafloor in waters adjacent to the U.S. Marine Corps' Camp Schwab may start as early as late July.

The environmental group has called for the government to suspend the plan and conduct follow-up research. The waters around Okinawa Prefecture are the dugongs' northernmost habitat. The creature is designated as a protected species by the Japanese government. The society said the evidence for dugongs was discovered by a group of local divers. The divers have found dugongs feeding at 30 to 50 locations over a widespread area several times since May. The largest concentration was about 50 meters east of Cape Henoko in Oura Bay, it said.

full story: http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201407100038

Tropical Fish Pushed South By Warming Seas Are Destroying Kelp Forests And Seagrass Meadows: Researchers (Australia)

9 July 2014, by Chris Pash, Business Insider Australia

The migration of tropical fish as a result of ocean warming poses a serious threat to the temperate areas they invade, because they overgraze on kelp forests and seagrass meadows, a study has found. The harmful impact of tropical fish is most evident in southern Japanese waters and the eastern Mediterranean where there have been dramatic declines in kelps. There is also emerging evidence in Australia and the US that the spread of tropical fish towards the poles is causing damage in the areas they enter.

"The tropicalisation of temperate marine areas is a new phenomenon of global significance that has arisen because of climate change," says study lead author, Dr Adriana Verges, of the University of New South Wales. "Increases in the number of plant-eating tropical fish can profoundly alter ecosystems and lead to barren reefs, affecting the biodiversity of these regions, with significant economic and management impacts." The study is published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

full story: <http://www.businessinsider.com.au/tropical-fish-pushed-south-by-warming-seas-are-destroying-kelp-forests-and-seagrass-meadows-researchers-2014-7>

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<http://www.asianscientist.com/in-the-lab/tropical-fish-migration-destroying-kelp-seagrass-2014/>

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/07/140725-climate-change-tropical-fish-animals-ocean-science/>

Manatee fatalities show decline (FL, USA)

10 July 2014, by Keith Morelli, The Tampa Tribune

If it's not reckless boaters chopping into the backsides of manatees, it's the red tide. Or the cold. Or some mysterious bug along the southeastern coast that is claiming thousands of acres of seagrass, starving the sea cows to death. But so far this year, the number of manatees dying is down — an encouraging sign for those working to recover the species but sure to feed an escalating debate over whether Florida's signature marine mammal should be removed from the endangered species list.

"You can't base a species' recovery on just a snapshot," said Katie Tripp, director of science and conservation with the Save the Manatee Club. "You have to look at the entire picture. This process has been going on for decades. You can't just say this has been a good year; you can't put those blinders on." There were record manatee deaths in 2010 and 2013, she said, though normally, about 400 manatees die each year of natural or unnatural causes. "What we are facing now and what we are facing in the future," Tripp said, "is climate change, loss of habitat and loss of seagrass beds."

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission counted 218 dead manatees over the first six months of 2014, about a third of last year's count of 666 over the same period. Of the 218, 91 died in Brevard and Lee counties, two areas that year after year lead the state in manatee deaths. Of the 218 killed, 39, or 18 percent, died from encounters with boaters.

full story: <http://tbo.com/news/manatee-fatalities-show-decline-20140710/>

Entsch slams NT gov't for dugong on menu (NT, Australia)

9 July 2014, Ninemsn, AAP

Australia cannot condemn the Japanese for whaling as long as it permits the commercial consumption of dugong and turtle meat, says Queensland MP Warren Entsch who has lashed out at the NT government for listing the vulnerable species on a NAIDOC lunch menu. The NT government's Department of Corporate and Information Services' (DCIS) Social Club's first NAIDOC lunch is due to take place in Darwin on Thursday, and an email invitation said that for a gold coin donation lunch would feature "a delicious range of traditional home-cooked dishes including kangaroo satays, chilli crab, barramundi, curry goose, coconut curry chicken, dugong, turtle, chicken vermicelli and blutchung pork".

But federal Liberal MP Mr Entsch, the member for Leichhardt in far-north Queensland, said dugong and turtle should only be consumed in the name of traditional cultural practices, and only at the site it was taken. "It should not be vacuum-packed and sent around the country so that people can have a taste, and it certainly should not be exchanged for a gold coin donation; these are vulnerable species, not commercial species," Mr Entsch said in a statement on Wednesday.

Transporting turtle and dugong meat from where the animals were taken is against the spirit and intent of traditional hunting, Mr Entsch said, and he is calling on the Federal Environment Minister to immediately ban the take of the species unless it is for traditional and cultural purposes. Section 211 of the Native Title Act permits indigenous people to hunt protected species such as dugongs and turtles for "personal, domestic or non-commercial communal needs".
<http://www.9news.com.au/national/2014/07/09/17/04/entsch-slams-nt-govt-for-dugong-on-menu>

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<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/outrage-at-menu-for-naidoc-lunch/story-fnk1w5xv-1226983911229?nk=1042114af6477ae9cd52dca4f97d5c89>

Bahoi: A marine reserve that works (Indonesia)

7 July 2014, by tan cheng li, The Star Online

Bahoi is proof that small, community-managed marine sanctuaries have a better chance of success.

The people of Bahoi, a village that hugs the coastline of north Sulawesi in Indonesia, live off the richness of the sea. They mostly fish for a living, so a healthy ocean is essential if they are to support themselves. To protect their livelihood and ensure that the sea will continue to provide for future generations, the people of the village that is a two-hour drive from the provincial capital city of Manado, have set up an 8ha marine protected area (MPA) with the help of local conservation groups Yapeka and Celebio. No fishing or collecting of marine animals is allowed in this reserve off the coastline, and the effect of this protection is obvious during an afternoon of snorkelling: within the sanctuary is a thriving reef filled with myriad species of hard and soft corals, fish and other invertebrates. In the adjacent area that is unprotected, the reef is degraded.

Yapeka started working with Bahoi villagers to create the MPA in 2008. Its director of coasts and research, Akbar Digo, says the project ended last year but was renewed after support came in from French conservation group GoodPlanet Foundation and watchmaker Omega. Omega supports the project financially through proceeds from the sale of the Seamaster Planet Ocean 600M GoodPlanet GMT wristwatches. Akbar says the creation of the marine sanctuary is just one aspect of the project. "The plan is to expand the protected areas to cover mangroves and seagrass beds as there is connectivity between the three ecosystems ... the health of one will affect the others," explains the marine biologist.

To ensure that the project in Bahoi succeeds, a "bottom up" approach is taken – the conservation effort is led by the community rather than NGOs and the government forcing their plans on the people. The result of the self-enforcement is a decline in destructive fishing methods such as those which rely on explosives and cyanide. In a survey among 25 villagers in 2010, 14 attested to higher fish catch compared with five years earlier, and 15 said the variety of fish had increased.

full story: <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Environment/2014/07/07/Bahoi-Marine-reserve-that-works/>

Manatees may end endangered status (FL, USA)

05 July 2014, Business Mirror

The manatee's 47-year run as an endangered species may soon come to an end, as the federal government assesses whether the tubby marine mammal can look forward to a brighter future. The US Fish and Wildlife Service announced a preliminary conclusion on Tuesday that the manatee's prospects have improved to the point where it "may be warranted" to reclassify the species from endangered to threatened. The announcement triggers a more detailed, yearlong scientific review that could culminate in stripping the manatee of the endangered status it has held since 1967.

The change would have no immediate impact on boat slow-speed zones, dock-building limits or other rules that have made the seagrass-munching behemoths among the most controversial creatures in Florida. But some environmentalists and government officials say the loss of the endangered label could make it easier to challenge these measures. Pat Rose, executive director of the Save the Manatee Club, who opposes the change, said it would mean that the protection of manatees carries less weight in decisions over speed zones, the protection of springs, limits on fertilizers and other measures to reduce water pollution.

The announcement on Tuesday came in response to a petition from the Pacific Legal Foundation, a pro-business organization that goes to court to protect property rights, reduce regulations on business and fight race-based government programs. In this case, the foundation represents Save Crystal River, an organization of residents and business owners on the Gulf coast who are concerned about federal boating restrictions in King's Bay.

full story: <http://businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/en/features/biodiversity/34920-manatees-may-end-endangered-status>

Dugong to be protected from hunting for next decade (QLD, Australia)

4 July 2014, APN Newsdesk

Dugong living in and around the Keppel Islands on the Great Barrier Reef will be protected from hunting for at least the next 10 years, after a landmark agreement was reached with traditional owners. The agreement with the Woppaburra people of coastal central Queensland was announced by Environment Minister Greg Hunt and state National Parks Minister Steve Dickson on Thursday. It is part of a series of "traditional use of marine resources agreements" (TUMRA) along the reef's coastline, in a bid to improve the lot of turtles and dugong.

The Woppaburra people signed on for a decade-long moratorium on dugong hunting covering Great Keppel Island and the northern areas of the Keppel Island group off Yeppoon coast. Mr Hunt said the Yirrganydji people in Cairns also signed up for an agreement to allow some limited turtle and dugong hunting, but also ensure protection efforts remain near the reef. Another far north traditional owners group, the Gunggandji people, also agreed to "work closely" with the Yarrabah community to establish a "no-take zone" for turtles and dugong hunting at Green Island.

full story: <http://www.gattonstar.com.au/news/dugong-hunting-protected-keppel-islands/2309346/>

Mepa gives OK for mechanical shovel to clean sandy bay (Malta)

4 July 2014, by Matthew Xuereb, Times of Malta

A bulldozer and a mechanical shovel were used to clean up seagrass debris at Marsalforn Bay in Gozo recently, with the planning authority's blessing. The cleaners, engaged by the Gozo Ministry, used heavy machinery after Mepa accepted the ministry's method statement. Such work was previously done by hand because of the sensitive nature of the place and because natural sand is becoming increasingly rare.

A Mepa spokesman said the works were acceptable as they were "justified maintenance operations" for this particular location. The decision was heavily criticised by marine biologist Alan Deidun, who said it came as "no surprise" to him as it "simply depicts the standard way adopted in our islands". He added that the quantities of beached seagrass could easily be collected using manual shovels, for instance, "without resorting to such roughshod mechanical means".

Last year the Gozo Ministry defended the use of such equipment at Ramla L-Ħamra Bay to remove an excessive amount of pebbles and also at San Blas Bay, which is presently engulfed in controversy over alleged illegal development there.

full story: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140704/local/Mepa-gives-OK-for-mechanical-shovel-to-clean-sandy-bay.526209>

Sea cows grazing for seagrass during occasional visits to the Emerald Coast (FL, USA)

02 July 2014, The Northwest Florida Daily News

Every summer people in Northwest Florida spot a seemingly unexpected creature in local waters. The slow-moving gentle giants generally prompt the same question: Are manatees supposed to be here? "It depends on the manatee," said Martine deWit, a veterinarian with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Research Institute. "Some like to travel all the way along the Gulf Coast." In fact, when they venture from the warm springs after the winter, manatees take off in all directions where the water temperature is at 68 degrees or higher, she said. One even made it up the Atlantic Coast to Massachusetts.

The generally slow-moving mammals migrate each year in order to find more seagrass to eat. While it's possible to see a large group of manatees together, usually males chasing a female, and a mother and calf, many are loners. A few local sightings have already been reported this year — the most recent being near the Destin jetties. Others are likely to follow. According to local FWC spokesman Stan Kirkland, they've been receiving reports of manatees in the area since at least the 1970s although they are more abundant further down the coast.

Like most wildlife, the manatees should be looked at, not touched. As a protected species, laws forbid people from interacting or feeding manatees when they encounter them. "They've been around forever, really they're a part of our heritage," deWit said. "So enjoy them."

Full story: <http://www.nwfdailynews.com/outdoors/local-outdoor-news/sea-cows-grazing-for-seagrass-during-occasional-visits-to-the-emerald-coast-1.341111>

Barrier Reef dredge spoil could travel further, conservationists say (QLD, Australia)

1 July 2014, *The Guardian*, Australian Associated Press

Three million cubic metres of dredge spoil will be dumped in waters 20km from the reef following a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) decision on the expansion of the Abbot Point port in north Queensland. The bid to create one of the world's biggest coal terminals near Bowen was last month criticised by Unesco's world heritage committee meeting in Doha. Now, the North Queensland Conservation Council has obtained freedom of information documents that they say show the dredge spoil could travel further than had been anticipated, which could affect coral.

This was because modelling used to justify dredge spoil dumping had failed to factor in another set of modelling which can predict deep ocean current movements, a council spokesman, Jeremy Tager, said. The North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation modelling provided to GBRMPA showed the reef would be safe from dredge spoil.

Last month, it was revealed that GBRMPA had approved the dumping of 370,000 cubic metres of dredge spoil as part of a project to expand the Hay Point coal port south of Mackay, in central Queensland. A GBRMPA spokeswoman said modelling was only one of many tools the authority used to make impact predictions. "The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority follows a transparent and rigorous environmental impact assessment process to evaluate the possible risks or effects on the environment of a proposed activity," she said in a statement.

full story: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/01/barrier-reef-dredge-spoil-could-travel-further-conservationists-say>

Related articles:

<http://www.warwickdailynews.com.au/news/rethink-great-barrier-reef-dredging/2307269/>

Scallopers say 2014 season off to good start (FL, USA)

30 June 2014, by Ferdinand Zogbaum, *Bay News 9*

The scalloping season kicked off Saturday, and a lot of people spent this past weekend underwater cruising the seagrass for scallops. Wildlife officials did a survey to check the number of scallops before this season started. They say this season should be a lot like last season, or possibly even better.

All the positive dockside chatter is music to the ears of local businesses. State leaders opened this year's season a few days early to give them a boost. This year's scallop season will close on Sept. 25.

full story: http://www.baynews9.com/content/news/baynews9/news/article.html/content/news/articles/bn9/2014/6/30/scallopers_say_2014_.html

related articles:

<http://www.wtsp.com/story/entertainment/television/studio10/2014/07/21/its-time-for-the-great-bay-scallop-search/12954787/>

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/state/os-scallop-fabulous-adventure-florida-20140802,0,904855.story>

GALLERY

Cooktown, Qld (Australia): Level 1: 24 - 25 July 2014

Yuku-Baja-Muliku Ranger Base: 24 - 25 July 2014

Archer Point: 25 July 2014

Cape Upstart , Qld (Australia): 25 July 2014

Wet Tropics , Qld (Australia): 22-25 June 2014 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Yule Point: 22 June 2014

Green Island: 23 June 2014

Dunk Island: 24 June 2014

Lugger Bay: 25 June 2014

Injinoo, Cape York, Qld (Australia): 19 June 2014 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

CONFERENCES

The 11th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW11) (China, 7-10 November 2014)

Declining seagrasses in a changing world.

The International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW) gives a good chance for the scientists working on various aspects of seagrass ecosystems to come together and discuss their latest achievements. The ISBW11 will be held from 7-10 November 2014 at Sanya city, Hainan Province, China, organized by South China Sea Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. ISBW11 convenor is Dr Xiaoping Haung.

The following symposia themes were chosen for ISBW11:

- 1) Key Ecological Processes;
- 2) Ecosystem Vulnerability and Resilience;
- 3) Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services;
- 4) Management and Restoration.

Important dates:

- 10 August 2014 - The last day of abstract submission
- 01 September 2014 - End of early bird payment
- 25 September 2014 - Notification of abstract acceptance
- 15 October 2014 - End of online payment
- 25 October 2014 - Notification of final list of participants to the ISBW11
- 07 November 2014 - ISBW11 begins

for more information, visit <http://isbw11.csp.escience.cn/dct/page/1>

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 33,838 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 E- Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.