

Queensland *news* Seagrass-Watch

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What is Seagrass Watch ?

Seagrass-Watch is a community program being developed by DPI's Seagrass Ecology Group, based at the Northern Fisheries Centre in Cairns.

The ultimate aim of the Seagrass-Watch program is to involve the wider community in collecting information on changes in seagrass meadow characteristics (eg seagrass species, area, composition etc). The Seagrass-Watch program will contribute significantly to the management of local coastal areas.

Seagrass-Watch programs are funded by the Natural Heritage Trust Coast and Clean Seas Program and is already underway in the Hervey Bay and Whitsunday regions.

Why watch the grass grow ?

Seagrasses are well recognised as vitally important habitat for fisheries productivity and a food source for dugong and turtle. The health of much of Queensland's coastal environment depends on productive seagrass areas.

We are inviting everyone in the community to become involved in Seagrass-Watch - to be our eyes in coastal areas where there are important seagrass habitats. With a few simple techniques, anyone can record data and send it to the Seagrass-Watch coordinator based at the Northern Fisheries Centre in Cairns.

This data will give us information on the condition and trend of seagrasses around the state and recommendations can be made to the relevant coastal management authorities if changes have occurred in seagrass meadows beyond that of natural or seasonal variation.



How can I be involved ?

Scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing, walking along the intertidal areas - wherever you are along the coast, you can contribute to Seagrass-Watch. Spend as much or as little time gathering information for the Seagrass-Watch program - its up to you.

You can become involved in your nearest Seagrass-Watch program by contacting your local representative:

Hervey Bay: Jerry Comans

Hervey Bay Dugong and Seagrass Monitoring Program

ph 07 41242393

Whitsundays: Deb Duggan

DEH, Airlie Bch

ph 07 4946 7022

If you live in another area of the state contact Karen Vidler at DPI, Northern Fisheries Centre

☎ 07 4035 0100

Queensland's coast is home to 15 species of seagrass. Seven of these species have been found in Hervey Bay.



Dugong prefer the seagrass species *Halophila ovalis* and *Halodule uninervis* as a food source: Fast growing, high in nitrogen and low in lignin.

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Queensland Seagrass-Watch *news* continued ..

Over 250 sites recorded at Hervey Bay !!!!

Hervey Bays' volunteer force (in particular Jerry Comans and Karen Kirk) have been busy photographing, mapping and recording abundance and composition of intertidal seagrasses at Piabla, Burrum Heads, Pt Vernon and Shelley Beach. They have obtained data from over 250 sites on transects which coincide with Beach Protection Authority Survey transects. Great Effort guys !!!!!



Port Douglas - Interest in Seagrass Watch

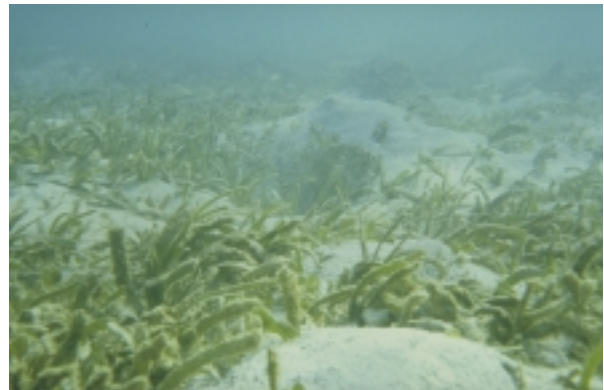
Interest in establishing a Seagrass Watch in the Port Douglas/ Mossman region came from a number of local groups mid this year. An introductory seminar was held at Port Douglas on the 24th September. The Seagrass Ecology Group presented information on general seagrass ecology, and Seagrass-Watch, while the Kuku Yalinji Marine Resource Committee also presented work on gathering local knowledge on seagrasses: a Coastcare funded project.

The Mossman Gorge community, local tourism Industry, Low Isles Preservation Society, DEH and the wider community are keen to see a Seagrass Watch program up and running in the Port Douglas region.



Any comments or suggestions about the Seagrass-Watch program would be greatly appreciated.

NEXT ISSUE OUT JANUARY 1999



UPCOMING EVENTS

Whitsundays Training Exercise

2-4 October 1998

Staff from DPI, Northern Fisheries Centre will be conducting a seminar and training exercise for people in the Whitsundays area who would like to become involved in the Seagrass Watch program for this region.

The public seminar will begin at Whitsundays Wanderers (ex Spinnackers Restaurant) 7.30pm Friday 2nd October. Tea and coffee will be provided. Following the seminar, a training exercise on seagrass monitoring will be held on Saturday and Sunday.

Please contact Hamish Malcolm DEH Townsville for more information on 07 47225318

Hervey Bay Seafood Festival

11 October 1998

Charlton Esplanade

Chantal Roder from DPI, Cairns will be in Hervey Bay for the Seafood Festival to answer any questions about the Seagrass Watch program. Drop by for a chat.

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