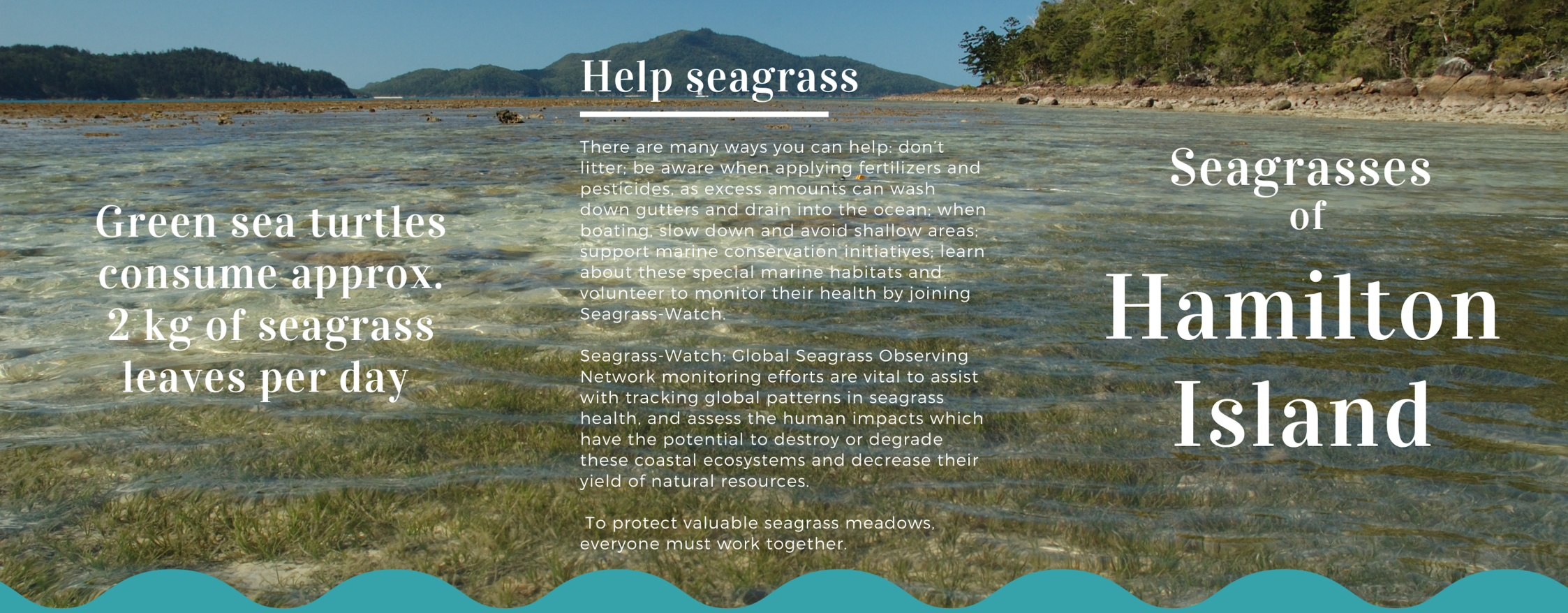

Green sea turtles consume approx. 2 kg of seagrass leaves per day

Help seagrass

There are many ways you can help: don't litter; be aware when applying fertilizers and pesticides, as excess amounts can wash down gutters and drain into the ocean; when boating, slow down and avoid shallow areas; support marine conservation initiatives; learn about these special marine habitats and volunteer to monitor their health by joining Seagrass-Watch.

Seagrass-Watch: Global Seagrass Observing Network monitoring efforts are vital to assist with tracking global patterns in seagrass health, and assess the human impacts which have the potential to destroy or degrade these coastal ecosystems and decrease their yield of natural resources.

To protect valuable seagrass meadows, everyone must work together.

Seagrasses of Hamilton Island

About Us

Seagrass-Watch: Global Seagrass Observing Network is one of the largest long-term seagrass observing programs globally, and is highly recognised for it's scientific rigour.

Participants all share a passion in marine conservation.

Participants involved in the Global Seagrass Observing Network develop a deep sense of custodianship and understanding of their local marine environments that reaches throughout the wider community.

Contact

PO BOX 4
Clifton Beach, QLD 4879
admin@seagrasswatch.org

www.seagrasswatch.org

Local eyes. Global wise

SEAGRASS-WATCH
GLOBAL SEAGRASS OBSERVING NETWORK

Aerial photograph 27 August 2003, courtesy Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water (©NRW)

About seagrass

Seagrasses are the only marine flowering plant. There are approximately 60 seagrass species (possibly 72) globally that belong to four major groups. Seagrasses are not seaweeds. Seaweed is the common name for algae.

Seagrass live in sheltered coastal waters, undergo pollination while submerged and complete their entire life cycle underwater. They grow much like land grasses, with extensive below ground rhizomes or runners. Plants form small patches that develop into large continuous meadows. These meadows may consist of one or many species, sometimes up to 12 species present within one location.

Importance

Seagrass is one of the most productive natural ecosystems globally. Seagrasses are as important as forests in storing carbon (on an areal basis) and can store carbon 35 times faster than rainforests.

Seagrass occupy less than 0.2% of the world's oceans, but are responsible for more than 10% of all carbon in ocean sediments annually.

Seagrasses improve water quality by acting as nutrient sinks, buffering/filtering nutrient/chemical inputs to the marine environment. They also stablise marine sediment and help avert erosion.

Seagrasses provide food and shelter for many organisms including Sea turtles and dugongs.

SEAGRASS-WATCH
GLOBAL SEAGRASS OBSERVING NETWORK

Hamilton's seagrass

Nine seagrass species can be found in Catseye Bay. Scattered over the sandy areas exposed at low tide you will find the narrow leaved *Halodule uninervis* and *Halophila ovalis*, both species are food for dugong. At the eastern end of the bay you'll find the darker leaved *Zostera muelleri* subsp. *capricorni* . Mixed in amongst coral on the reef flat is leaved *Thalassia hemprichii* and a wide leaf form of *Halodule uninervis*, often eaten by green turtles which visit the reef flat during high tides. If you look closely you'll find some *Cymodocea serrulata* with its serrated leaf tips and its narrow leaved relative *Cymodocea rotundata* with smooth leaf tips. On the shoreward edge of the coral are small patches of rare *Thalassodendron ciliatum*: its presence on Hamilton Island is the southern most occurrence of this species in the Pacific. On the outer edge of the reef flat in the shallow waters you will find *Syringodium isoetifolium* with it's distinctive spaghetti-like leaves. Just over the edge of the reef crest in the deeper waters (>3m) you will find the fern like *Halophila spinulosa*, also a favoured food for dugong.