SEAGRASS

UNDER PRESSURE

Both humans and seagrass share a preference for coastal locations. Urban and rural coastal development is placing our marine coastal ecosystems under pressure.

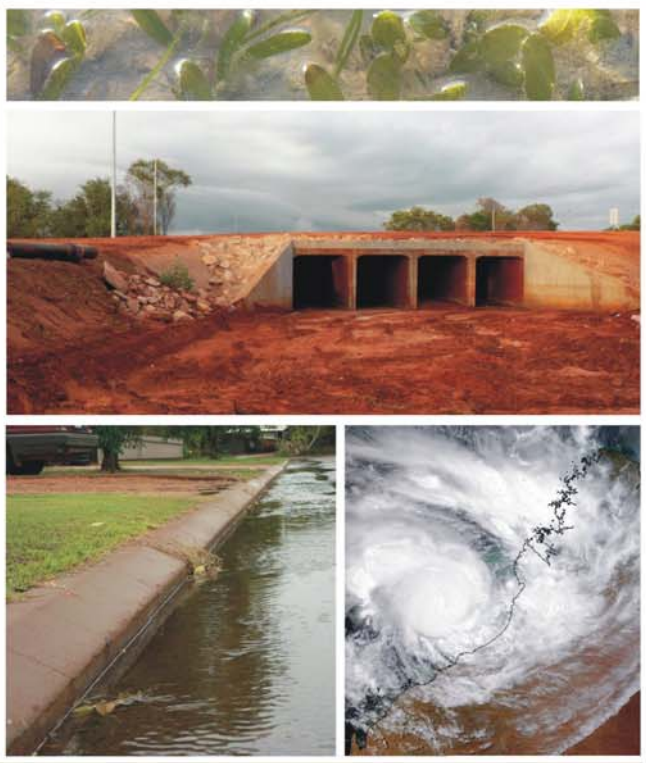
Even under water, the survival of seagrass is determined largely by the availability of light which is essential for photosynthesis. This basic requirement is being threatened by coastal development.

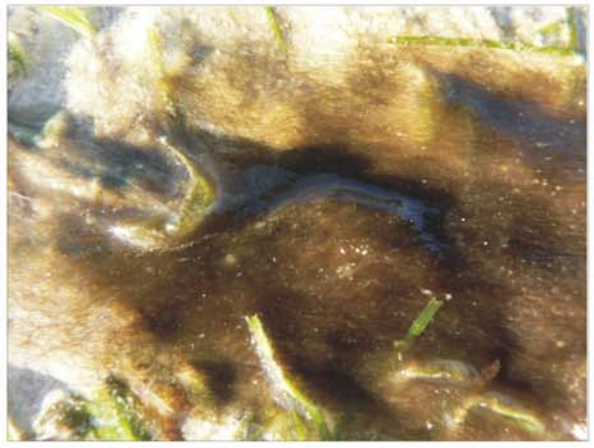
TWO PRIMARY FACTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DECREASED LIGHT AVAILABILITY:

- INCREASED TURBIDITY (suspended sediments)

– caused by: urban run-ff, land clearing, boating, over-grazing, dredging, bush fires, trawling, and storm run-off.

Intense storms and cyclones can reduce water clarity, shift sediments and uproot plants causing significant damage to seagrass beds. Predictions of more intense and frequent storms associated with global warming suggest that the effect on seagrass will be increasingly significant.





Blue-green algae species, *Lyngbya majuscula* smothering seagrass species, *Halodule uninervis* and *Halopila ovalis*.

- ALGAL BLOOMS

– caused by: nutrient rich run-off from gardens, sewerage and industrial and agricultural areas.

High nutrient levels can also promote excessive epiphytic growth on seagrass leaves which inhibits photosynthesis.

Following an acute impact, many seagrass species can take several years or even decades to recover. Some species will never be able to re-establish. Human activity must be managed to prevent such impacts.

The Broome Community Seagrass Monitoring Project is supported by:

Save the Nature of the Kimberley
environs KIMBERLEY INC

Government of Western Australia
Department of Environment and Conservation

Seagrass-Watch

Coastwest