

# Seagrass-Watch

Global assessment and monitoring program

## increasing the charisma of seagrass through education and awareness.

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The public's perception of seagrasses is not as great as other marine ecosystems despite their important ecological role. With global seagrass losses reported to be equivalent to one football field every 30 minutes, seagrass ecosystems are facing a crisis, and there is a critical need for a targeted global conservation effort that includes informing regulators and the public of the value of seagrass meadows.

### Addressing the charisma "gap"

Since its inception in 1998, Seagrass-Watch has been attempting to address this "charisma gap". Apart from scientific monitoring, Seagrass-Watch's objectives are to educate and raise awareness in the general community of coastal management issues and support conservation measures which will ensure the long-term resilience of seagrass ecosystems. Seagrass-Watch does this via a variety of extension and outreach tools.



### About the program

Seagrass-Watch is a global participatory monitoring program active in more than 25 countries. It is focused on long-term seagrass monitoring, education, awareness and capacity building. Participants range in ages from 18 to 72 and represent a diverse cross-section of the community, including local citizens, indigenous rangers, and scientists. Information collected has been used in local decision making on habitat management practices and protection.

## Education & Engagement

### Scientific monitoring & assessment



Seagrass-Watch has a strong scientific underpinning with an emphasis on consistent data collection, recording and reporting. Quality Assurance-Quality Control procedures ensure that the program is producing high quality data, and that time and resources are not wasted. Monitoring occurs at more than 350 sites and is assisting with tracking global patterns in seagrass health, and assessing human impacts on seagrass meadows.

### Training & capacity building

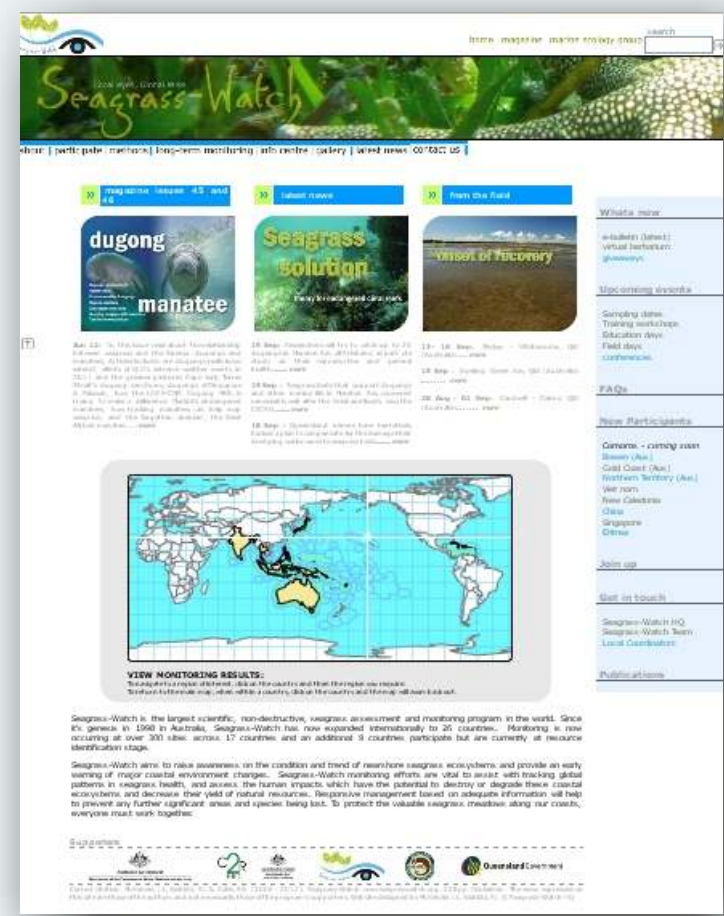


Training is provided by Seagrass-Watch HQ qualified scientists to build the capacity of participants to collect information for the ongoing management and protection of seagrass resources. Formally endorsed training courses are comprised of three components: formal lectures, field training, and laboratory exercises. The training courses are aimed at experienced/confident participants or resource managers who wish to establish and monitor Seagrass-Watch sites on their own.

### Formal education approaches (e.g., school curricula, media)

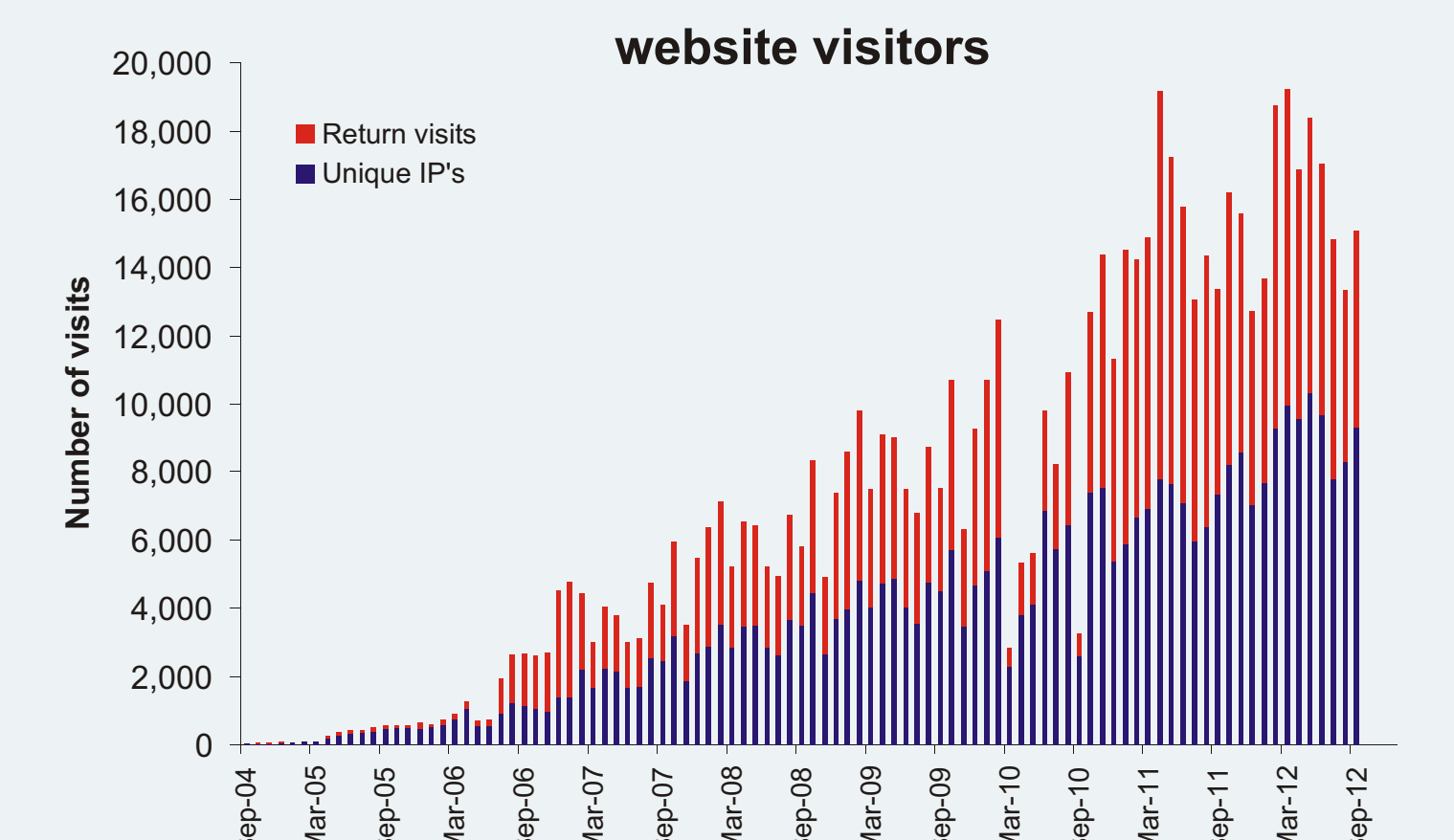


Educational aids developed by the program contribute to marine conservation curricula in primary and secondary schools where they assist students to become lifelong learners. Seagrass-Watch also encourages participants to use media avenues (e.g., television, radio, newspapers) to raise public awareness of concerns and solutions within local seagrass ecosystems. Informing local citizens of the issues within their region, encourages participation and advocates against activities which threaten seagrass and the animals which depend on it.



## www.seagrasswatch.org

One of the most effective communication tools the Seagrass-Watch program uses is its active and informative website. The website is content rich, and populated with high-quality photographs of seagrass and associated organisms. The website has become a first stop for many online users searching for seagrass information. The website popularity has increased from just a couple of visitors a day in September 2004, to 500-600 visitors a day. The website provides an easily accessible portal to explore and learn what seagrasses are, why they are important, how they are threatened and what you can do to help stop the decline. It teaches you how to identify seagrass and even provides a virtual herbarium for the more enthusiastic. It includes the latest articles on seagrass in the news and provides reports on the state of seagrass where participants are monitoring seagrass status.



## Awareness Raising

### Field days



One of the most effective communication tools is face-to-face interaction and enabling the wider community to experience seagrass ecosystems via interactive displays and field tours. Using all the senses to experience the beauty of a seagrass meadow and its associated fauna is one of the most powerful ways to develop that special magnetic charm or appeal that seagrass conservationists have for seagrass ecosystems.

### Wider communication (informal education)



Seagrass-Watch produces a number of graphic rich extension materials (e.g., brochures, pamphlets, bookmarks, etc). One of the most popular general-interest publications is the Seagrass-Watch magazine which focuses on topical seagrass and related issues; providing synthesis, visualization, and context. Magazine issues or articles which focus on endangered or charismatic megafauna (e.g., turtles, dugong, manatee, sawfish, giant clams, sea horses) have proved popular with a wider audience; measured by the number of downloads and requests. Available in digital and in hard copy (from many local/state libraries). By focusing on issues of broader concern (e.g., climate change) and using established networks (e.g., online forums) we have captured a wider audience.

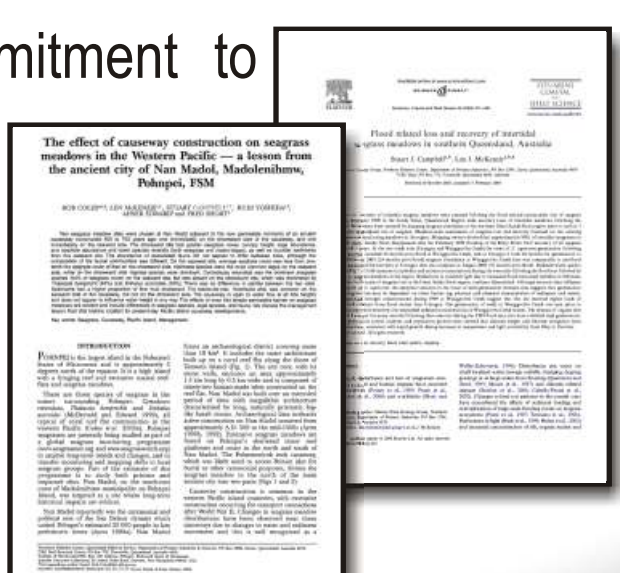
### Social media

Web- and mobile-based technologies are one of the most powerful sources for news updates and interactive dialogues available today. By employing platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, Seagrass-Watch communicates the latest seagrass news from around the world, provides program up-dates and facilitates the sharing of knowledge between users. Besides dialogue, social media also enables educational video sharing. A quick search for "seagrass" on YouTube will land on "Seagrass: Pastures of the sea", a presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important, produced by Seagrass-Watch HQ, with over 25,000 views.



### Scientific reports & publications

Seagrass-Watch scientists have a strong commitment to advancing knowledge of seagrass ecosystems and the factors which drive/influence them. A key element of scientific involvement is the production of scientific literature for other researchers in marine ecosystems. Information from the Seagrass-Watch program is published in peer-reviewed journals and in grey literature reports. All publications can be accessed on the program's website.



For more information contact  
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or visit  
www.seagrasswatch.org

