

Seagrass-Watch HQ

From: Seagrass-Watch HQ [hq@seagrasswatch.org]
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SEAGRASS-WATCH BULLETIN

06 April 2007

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NEWS

Tsunami strikes Solomon Islands

April 3, 2007, Solomon Star

At least 28 people have died in the Solomon Islands after a tsunami swept ashore following a strong undersea earthquake in the South Pacific.

The saddest day in the country's history arrived without notice as the main town in the western Solomon's, Gizo was ripped apart by a giant wave, whilst Choiseul's Sasamuga village was swallowed by a 12 foot wave which penetrated up to 500 metres in land. Local officials fear the numbers of dead could rise, with reports of outlying villages being destroyed.

Seagrass-Watch has participants in the Solomon Islands. WWF Solomon Islands & local community members at Mbanbamba Island near Gizo in New Georgia, Western Province, have been monitoring their seagrasses since 2004[more](#)

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Saving the Sea Cow(Thailand)

April 1, 2007, by Normita Thongtham, The Bangkok Post

A mother embracing her child is an all too familiar sight - but did you know that mother dugongs do the same? Did you know that dugongs are the gentlest of all marine creatures, but their death rate is among the highest and that there are now only around 250 of them left in Thai waters?

These are some of the findings of researcher Kanjana Adulyanukosol, known among her fellow marine biologists as chao mae payoon (the godmother- or patroness- of dugongs) for her dedication to the study of this marine species.[more](#)

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

No more Chek Jawa tours - for now (Singapore)

March, 25, 2007, by : Boon Chan, Straits Times

TOURS to Chek Jawa, a popular nature enclave in Pulau Ubin, have been suspended because the stretch of wetlands needs to recover after being affected badly by heavy rains.

Record heavy rains in December last year and January this year had led to an influx of freshwater into the Johor River in Malaysia. The freshwater flowing into the Johor Straits, where Pulau Ubin is located, significantly altered the salinity of the water around Chek Jawa. There was 'widespread death' of marine flora and fauna that were not able to adjust quickly to the changes, according to the NParks website. Mr Teo said that sea anemones, starfish and sponges were particularly hard hit as they were sensitive to the water's salinity level.

In order to enable more people to experience the rich biodiversity of Chek Jawa, the \$7-million Pulau Ubin conservation and management plans were launched in April 2005. Work on the visitor centre, viewing tower and boardwalk is expected to be completed next month. However, the amenities will not be open to the public until tours are resumed.[more](#)

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Nature conservationists focus on seagrass to preserve eco-system (Singapore)

March 24, 2007, By Noor Mohd Aziz, Channel NewsAsia

There is a new conservation buzz in town, and it is all about seagrass. It is pure unbridled passion for nature conservation that has brought a group of nearly 30 volunteers together on a hot Saturday afternoon.

They are attending a workshop on documenting and collecting specimens of seagrass. "Seagrass help support our biodiversity and they help support our fish and prawn and other animals," says Len McKenzie, Principal Scientist and Seagrass-Watch Programme Leader. "They are also supporting our endangered species like dugong and turtle which certainly pass through the waters of Singapore as they move between Malaysia and Indonesia. So it is very important that Singapore retain some of these green pockets of Seagrass, if you like, to ensure the sustainability of our ocean, sustainability of our fisheries and sustainability of our endangered species," Mr McKenzie continues.

Says Siti Maryam Yaakub, Team Seagrass Coordinator, "Team Seagrass covers a new niche in the local conservation scene because the past 5-10 years or so since Chek Jawa had been put on deferment, you actually have a lot of awareness programmes and, I think that a step ahead of awareness is actually being proactive in monitoring the environment, in doing something tangible. So that's how Team Seagrass actually fills the niche and that's why we have so many volunteers as well."[more http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Report shows red tide killed 8 manatees (Fort Myers, FL, USA)

April 05, 2007, By Kevin Lollar, The News-Press

Toxicology reports released Thursday show that red tide killed eight manatees recovered in Lee County between March 7 and March 24. Ten other manatees are suspected red tide cases.

Lee County's manatee death count for 2007 stands at 27. Five of those manatees were killed by watercraft, and two died from cold stress — manatees are extremely cold-sensitive and travel to warm-water refuges such as the Florida Power & Light discharge area in the Orange River when water temperatures drop. Meanwhile, some scientists think an environmental newcomer might become a threat to manatees.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon that occurs when the single-cell alga *Karenia brevis*, which produces a powerful toxin (brevetoxin), undergoes a population explosion, or bloom. Brevetoxin kills manatees in two ways: The animals inhale it at the surface and ingest it while feeding on seagrass. Scientists have discovered that brevetoxin can remain on seagrass or in the tissues of filter-feeding organisms attached to seagrass for weeks. "Once red tide is gone, some grass beds stay hot," said Ken Arrison, a biologist at the pathobiology lab. "Manatees are starting to go out to their normal range, leaving the warm-water habitats, and finding these hot beds." A new player might be a threat to manatees: the non-native blue-green alga *Lyngbya majuscula*, which produces several toxins. *Lyngbya* is thick now on Tarpon Bay seagrass beds and possibly elsewhere, said Rick Bartleson, a research scientist at the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Marine Laboratory. Bartleson said manatees might be eating *Lyngbya* as they graze in seagrass beds.

Source & full story:

<http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070405/NEWS0105/70405060/1075>
http://www.sptimes.com/2007/04/04/State/Dateline_Florida.shtml

Area middle school students get hands-on learning experience (Pensacola, FL, USA)

April, 4, 2007, by Chris Phillips, PensacolaNewsJournal.com

Students at Woodlawn Beach Middle School again are enjoying a rare opportunity to receive some hands-on fishing experience. Woodlawn Beach students have been converging on Shoreline Park South since Monday to learn about fishing, knot tying, seagrass awareness,

water quality and more.

"The main thing, believe it or not, is not fishing," Della Ratta said. The DEP is coming out and providing a clinic. There is a touch tank, almost like a small aquarium, with sealife from Santa Rosa Sound. He hopes to continue the tradition of teaching youngsters about nature and how to keep it pristine. He has been receiving plenty of help.

Source & full story: <http://www.pensacolanejournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070404/SPORTS05/704040325/1002>

Research program maps Australian dugong family tree (Australia)

April 2 2007, Genevieve Hussey, 7:30 report (TV PROGRAM TRANSCRIPT)

Marine scientists off the coast of Queensland are now driving a world first research program to solve at least some of the mystery. Using the latest DNA technology, they're identifying individual dugongs and creating a family tree for the Australian population at least. They believe the information will help in protecting the species, which is under pressure worldwide.

Source & full story: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s1888002.htm>

Keeping the Cape's water clean Hyannis, MA, USA)

April 1, 2007, By Doug Fraser, Cape Cod Times

Until recently, the most expensive municipal project ever undertaken on Cape Cod had generated few headlines. In every Cape and Islands town, volunteers have quietly labored for years collecting water-quality samples from ponds, rivers and coastal estuaries as part of the state's Massachusetts Estuaries Project. The state Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth analyzed those samples and are in the process of telling towns by what amount they need to reduce the flow of nitrogen and other contaminants from their septic systems, lawns and roads, into sensitive water bodies to keep them healthy.

Nutrients, mainly from septic systems, enter coastal waters, ponds and rivers, and act like fertilizer, accelerating the growth of algae. The waterborne plants multiply rapidly, clouding the water, blocking sunlight from reaching vital eelgrass beds, or outright smothering life on the bottom under a thick mat of plant growth.

Source: <http://www.capecodonline.com/cctimes/keepingthe1.htm>

Huizenga boosts money flow to Rivers Coalition in Stuart (Vero Beach, FL, USA)

March 31, 2007, By Gabriel Margasak, Vero Beach Press

STUART — Miami Dolphins owner H. Wayne Huizenga has pumped major money into an environmental group's fight to make federal officials move polluted water out of Lake Okeechobee and away from the St. Lucie River Estuary and Indian River Lagoon.

Huizenga, a stakeholder in Treasure Coast development, wrote a check for \$50,000 and pledged \$50,000 more next year to the Rivers Coalition, to back an alliance of 49 local environmental groups and 22 homeowners suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to stop dirty lake water from gushing into the once pristine estuary.

The payoff, if the homeowners win the suit, could be \$50 million toward planting seagrass, muck removal, oyster farming and other such water-cleaning projects. Oysters alone are said to be able to filter pollution from 10 gallons of water an hour.

Mark Perry, executive director of the Florida Oceanographic Society, said the estuary's water quality is favorable because a severe drought has stopped releases from the lake since last year. 'The sea grass is coming back. If you've driven over the Indian River Lagoon recently, that clear blue water goes all the way up.

Source & full story:

http://www.tcpalm.com/tcp/local_news/article/0,2545,TCP_16736_5454280,00.html

Mack bill targets Lake O discharges (Fort Myers,FL,USA)

March 30, 2007, By Kevin Lollar, The News-Press

The Caloosahatchee River and estuary might get relief under legislation proposed Thursday in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rep. Connie Mack IV, R-Fort Myers, introduced a bill that would authorize a water-quality component for the C-43 Basin Storage Reservoir being built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Whether other U.S. legislators will sympathize with Southwest Florida's water problems remains to be seen.

Since the extremely wet rainy seasons of 2004 and 2005, the river and estuary have suffered from problems related to huge freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee. Among other things, nutrients in the water triggered massive algal blooms that smothered seagrass and killed fish.

When completed in 2010, the \$338 million reservoir in Hendry County will store up to 55 billion gallons of water during extremely wet seasons, thus preventing huge slugs of water from rushing down the river. But many people have criticized the project because it included no plans to clean nutrients from the water before it was released down the river. If Mack's bill passes, the reservoir will be constructed to contain vegetation that will filter out nutrients.

Source & full story: <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070330/NEWS0105/70330001/1075>

As Sharks Vanish, Chaotic New Order Emerges

March 29 2007 By Stephen Leahy, Inter Press Service

Major declines in large sharks along the U.S. coast have in turn triggered declines in shellfish and reduced water quality, proof that the ocean's food web is collapsing, a groundbreaking new study reveals.

With the virtual elimination of large sharks along the U.S. east coast, such as black tip and tiger sharks, the species they used to eat -- small sharks, rays and skates - have boomed in numbers. Cownose ray populations increased 20-fold since 1970 and as a direct consequence, shellfish like scallops that the cownose ray eats have been nearly wiped out despite major conservation efforts.

The cascade of impacts resulting from overfishing large sharks goes further still, marine scientist Ransom Myers and coauthors document in a paper published Thursday in *Science*. The loss of scallops has reduced water quality because scallops and other shellfish filter sea water. And the cownose ray is now feeding voraciously on other shellfish, like oysters and clams.

"We've also seen large seagrass beds the rays have dug up looking for shellfish," says co-author Charles Peterson of the Institute of Marine Sciences at the University of North Carolina. Seagrass is considered the "nursery" for many fish species, but Peterson says there is no data available on what the impacts the rays are having on seagrass beds.

This current study is perhaps the first ever documentation of the cascading impacts of the loss of large sharks because ocean food webs are so complex and there is little data.

Source & full story: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=37144>
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N29193717.htm>

Study of the ecology of seagrasses in Geographe Bay will help protect marine ecosystem

(Western Australia, Australia)

March 29, 2007, University of Western Australia Media Release

Researchers from The University of Western Australia have begun a major study of the ecology of seagrasses in Geographe Bay to help ensure the future protection of an important and fragile marine ecosystem.

Dr Mark Westera, Dr Peter Barnes and Dr Gary Kendrick, from the UWA School of Plant Biology, were awarded funding for the study from the South West Catchments Council (SWCC) - made possible by funding from joint initiatives of the Western Australian and Australian Governments, the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

"The seagrass meadows covering the seafloor of Geographe Bay form an important habitat for numerous fish and invertebrate species, utilise nutrients from terrestrial run-off and help stabilise sand throughout the bay - thus reducing erosion of the shoreline," Dr Westera said. "The aim of this study is to set a benchmark of seagrass health and water quality for Geographe Bay so that any impacts of human population growth on seagrasses can be detected and minimised. "With continued high population and tourist growth forecast for the State's South-West, there is a potential for increased stress on the seagrass meadows."

Source & full story: <http://www.ausfoodnews.com.au/db/node/31464>

Aquatic survey carried out in Mullet Bay Pond (Philipsburg, Saint Maarten, Netherlands Antilles)

March 29, 2007, Netherlands Antilles Daily Herald

An aquatic survey was conducted recently of Mullet Pond to ascertain the fish population and other underwater attributes by Ocean Care, Environmental Protection In the Caribbean (EPIC) and St. Maarten Pride Foundation. The pond, which borders former Mullet Resort, harbours extensive seagrass beds and aquatic mangrove trees, is part of Simpson Bay Lagoon, one of the largest salt water lagoons in the Caribbean.

Using SCUBA and photography equipment, the group that forms part of the Mullet Pond Coalition, documented a wide range of fauna and flora in the pond, one of the few untouched areas of the lagoon that still has a viable Mangrove population. It serves as a breeding area for many fish that eventually find their way unto the reefs and seagrass beds in the seas surrounding the island.

Source & full story: <http://www.thedailyherald.com/news/daily/j262/ank262.html>

Sebastian Inlet dredging starts (Melbourne, FL, USA)

March 27, 2007, by Jim Waymer, Florida Today

SEBASTIAN - Boat captains have run aground on the threatened seagrass for decades. But soon they can kick back and relax a bit as they coast through the dredged channel of a safer inlet, now notorious as one of the most treacherous in Florida.

The district got a state permit to dredge the inlet to the Intracoastal in 1996, but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers refused to issue a dredging permit due to concerns about threatened Johnson's seagrass that surrounds the inlet's interior. The new channel will destroy about 1.6 acres of Johnson's seagrass habitat from an area where grass covers 27 to 38 percent of the bottom. To make up for the damage, the district must cut segments of seagrass that lie in the way of the new channel and use them to repair areas where boat propellers have scarred the lagoon bottom.

Source & full story: <http://www.floridatoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070327/NEWS01/703270340/1006>

Dredging given green light (Melbourne, Australia)

March 22, 2007, Ashley Gardiner, Melbourne Herald Sun

Report on the \$763 million project to deepen Melbourne's shipping channels has predicted it will have no long-term environmental impact. The project's estimated cost has blown out by a further \$183 million, but the State Government yesterday pointed to an economic bonanza of up to \$2.2 billion. If approved, dredging in Port Phillip Bay could start early next year. As the findings of a 15,000-page, \$114 million project investigation were released, it was revealed:

TOXIC material from the Yarra River, Williamstown and Port Melbourne would be dumped in the bay for 100 years.

PLUMES of cloudy water would hit southern peninsula beaches in Easter holidays in 2008 and 2009.

FISH stocks will be affected for up to two years.

EXCLUSION zones will be thrown around the dredger, affecting diving, fishing and boating.

FIVE per cent of the bay's seagrass, a food source for fish, could be affected.

"There will be some visible effects such as turbidity, but any short-term impacts will be manageable, confined in area and temporary." In trials, plumes normally cleared in three days. Seven weeks of public hearings start in June, then the state and federal governments will have to give final approval.

Source & full story: <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,21424923-661,00.html>

Anglers defend redfish roundups (Melbourne, FL, USA)

March 22, 2007, BY JIM WAYMER, FLORIDA TODAY

TITUSVILLE - As hundreds of elite anglers vie for this region's fattest "reds," wildlife officials plan to tighten the redfish rules for anyone aiming to hook one of Florida's heartiest fighters.

"I think some of the bigger proponents of doing the right thing are the people who fish these tournaments," said Jim Hobales, 49, of Miami, a tournament contestant. But some local anglers fear the toll such large-scale fishing tournaments are taking on a species that's shown declines in some areas of the state in recent years. And biologists fear the damage to the fish and its seagrass habitat could worsen as tournaments, and the fish's popularity in general, continue to grow.

The events bring more boats that can rip up seagrass. Stressed fish caught and released can die days later. And some local fishermen say tournament contestants at times "run and gun" past where they're fishing, speeding through designated go-slow zones. No one knows for sure how many redfish die in professional tournaments or the overall impact to lagoon grass flats.

On online fish forums, local anglers have reported seeing high-powered tournament skiffs "running the flats" in a foot-and-a-half or less water at up to 60 mph, trying to spook up schools of redfish. And much of the damage to grass flats can happen as fishermen practice in the days before the tournament begins, when fewer eyes are watching. Prop scarring could be worse this year because below-normal rain has led to an unusually shallow lagoon.

Source & full story: <http://www.floridatoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070322/NEWS01/703220346>

Littering will cost you! (San Pedro, Belize)

March 22, 2007, San Pedro Sun

Last year, the San Pedro Town Council (SPTC) embarked on a campaign entitled "La Isla Bonita es mi Casa and I like mi Casa clean." Through this campaign, the general public was invited to use the garbage cans situated around the island.

Last month, SPTC issued a press release stating that a fine would be implemented for any and all persons found littering the streets of San Pedro. Homeowners are also encouraged to keep

their yards and surroundings clean. SPTC also advises businesses located on the beach side NOT to dump garbage on the piles of seagrass. The seagrass collected and piled is used as fill for the streets and/or low lying housing areas of San Pedro Town. SPTC hereby asks the cooperation of the public in this matter. Anyone caught in this act is liable to a littering ticket.

Source & full story: <http://www.sanpedrosun.net/old/07-121.html>

Permit propels Sebastian Inlet dredging project (Vero Beach, FL, USA)

March 21, 2007, By ED BIERSCHEK Vero Beach Press

SEBASTIAN INLET — The long-awaited channel extension from the Sebastian Inlet to the Intracoastal Waterway looks like it finally will become a reality after about 15 years of frustration for officials and boaters who often run aground along the shallower waters west of the inlet.

The Sebastian Inlet District on Monday received its federal permit for the dredging, said Inlet Administrator Marty Smithson. The permit was the final piece district officials were waiting for before going forward with the dredging project.

Administration held up issuance of the federal permit because of the presence of the relatively rare Johnson's seagrass. During the next 10 years, Smithson estimated the inlet district spent about \$1 million on various studies examining the effect dredging would have on nearby seagrass beds and the surrounding environment to satisfy state and federal officials. About 1.64 acres of sea grass could be damaged as a result of the dredging project.

In order to make up for the loss of the sea grass, the district will provide \$750,000 toward Indian River County's \$4.3 million project to clean up stormwater flowing into the lagoon from the Main Relief Canal. The cleaner water is expected to help promote seagrass growth.

Source & full story:

http://www.tcpalm.com/tcp/local_news/article/0,2545,TCP_16736_5431595,00.html

Jamaica to formulate wetlands policy (Kingston, Jamaica)

March 19, 2007, BY PETRE WILLIAMS, Jamaica Observer

In a move to protect its wetlands and the vast biological diversity they support, Jamaica is to formulate a wetlands policy that is, among other things, to determine how such sites are managed. While it is still early days, the national policy is expected to have teeth, and should impact future developments, including hotels and housing settlements on the island.

"It is important to note that wetlands have values beyond the values for their removal and replacement with hotels, housing and farms. Studies have shown that when the full value of a wetland is calculated, it is worth about four times more than the value of converting the wetland," the Ministry of Local Government and Environment said in response to inquiries from the Observer.

The ministry also cited the importance of the Portland Bight wetlands and cays, designated last year as a Ramsar site of international importance. That site is spread over 24,542 hectares and is located on the island's south coast. It includes 8,000 hectares of coastal mangroves, a salt marsh, several rivers, offshore cays, and seagrass beds. It is also a feeding and breeding ground for such species as the cave frog and the Jamaican boa.

Source & full story: http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/html/20070318T150000-0500_120546_OBS_JAMAICA_TO_FORMULATE_WETLANDS_POLICY_.asp

There's more green to celebrate in March than just shamrocks (Sarasota, FL, USA)

March 16, 2007, Celia Stearns, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

There's more green to celebrate in March than just shamrocks. March is a time to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, shamrocks, and seagrass! March also marks Seagrass Awareness Month. This time of year, few of us would consider plunging our heads into 60-degree water -- but we might be surprised at what's hidden among the seagrass. Starfish, blue crabs, crown conchs, snails, stingrays, and dozens of fish species all live in this unique, important habitat.

Seagrass also benefits our economy. More than 70 percent of recreationally and commercially important species spend part of their life in seagrass beds. In 2006, Florida's sea-grass communities supported an estimated harvest of \$71.4 million for six commercial species of fish and shellfish, as well as providing ideal spots for recreational fishing and kayaking.

These important habitats are under pressure. Water quality in Southwest Florida is being threatened by factors including increased development, changes in salinity due to freshwater flow alterations, and higher nutrient content from storm-water runoff. Physical damage from boat groundings and "prop scarring" can uproot grasses and sediment, resulting in substantial habitat loss that requires up to a decade before full recovery.

Those of us who spend time on the water can play a major role in protecting sea grasses. The conscientious boater should study charts and check tides, slow down when unsure of depth, and use marked channels. If you do run aground, immediately stop and raise the engine -- do not try to power through.

Source & full story: <http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070316/COLUMNIST13/703160558>

When Fishing In the Grassy Flats Always Be (Ruskin, FL, USA)

March 15, 2007, By Jonie Maschek, Observer News

In Cockroach Bay a law was passed to keep boaters from uprooting the seagrasses. They must tilt their motors up and glide in. Many anglers prefer to wade it. The law states no one is allowed to destroy seagrass in these waterways.

The seagrass is protected because it provides excellent protection for marine animals from open water predators. Manatees eat the seagrass blades. There are 52 varieties of seagrass worldwide but in Florida there are only 7 and only 4 in this local area: widgeon-grass, shoal, turtle and manatee. Be aware of posted seagrass signs and boat safely.

Source & full story: http://www.observernews.net/artman/publish/article_002093.shtml

Birds play key role in restoring seagrass (Fort Myers, FL, USA)

March 18, 2007, The News-Press

KEY WEST - It doesn't seem like a big deal really: a couple dozen cormorants, pelicans and gulls sitting on stakes rising above the blue-green waters of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Who would ever think these birds are doing their bit to help the environment? To be more precise, they're fertilizing seagrass beds that have been damaged by boats.

Most boat damage in Lee County's seagrass beds is prop scarring - a recent state study for the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program documented 30,064 acres of prop scars in the greater Charlotte Harbor region. In the Keys, the prop scarring is compounded by "blow-holes" — a blow hole is created when a boater runs aground in a seagrass bed and, instead of poling off or waiting for the tide to rise, uses the engines to power off. This action dredges a deep crater and blows away grass.

Because seagrass beds are essential components of the Gulf of Mexico's coastal environment, sanctuary scientists have developed a seagrass restoration project.

When a boat makes a blow-hole, the first step is to develop a three-dimensional map of the damage. Next, the blow-hole is filled. Finally, sanctuary staff drive 10-foot-long 3¼-inch PVC

pipes 5 feet into the bay bottom — on top of each pipe is a 4-inch-by-4-inch-by-2-inch block of wood — and plant shoal grass in the fill. This is where the birds come in: Marine birds are always looking for a place to perch, and the blocks of wood on the PVC pipes are very attractive. The bird droppings are a natural fertilizer." After 18 months, the stakes are removed; turtle grass moves in and displaces the other species.

Source & full story: <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070318/NEWS0105/703180401/1075>

Taylor resort plan draws agency critics (Gainesville, FL, USA)

March 17, 2007, Nathan Crabbe, Gainesville Sun

The state's growth-planning agency is threatening to sue Taylor County over a massive marina and resort project, joining a chorus of high-level voices opposing the proposal. State and federal agencies are raising questions about the environmental impact of the project, which would fill 100 acres of wetlands and cut a 36-acre channel through a state seagrass preserve. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has said the project might violate the Clean Water Act and shouldn't be approved.

Dr. J. Crayton Pruitt, a retired St. Petersburg heart surgeon, is behind the \$700 million project. It would bring a marina complex with six condominium and hotel towers as high as 25 stories to remote coastal land he owns near Dekle Beach.

The project would mean digging a two-mile-long channel through the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve and filling coastal wetlands. As mitigation, developers propose planting seagrass in propeller-damaged areas and restoring wetlands on surrounding timber land.

Source & full story: <http://www.gainesville.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070317/LOCAL/703170346/-1/news>

GALLERY

Singapore: 24-26 March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Seagrass-Watch HQ visited Singapore to conduct a workshop and catch up with TeamSeagrass. The first event was an early morning (630am) trip to Cyrene Reef. Located to the south of mainland Singapore, Cyrene Reef is a key maritime crossroad where east-west traffic routes cross north-south routes. Approximately five hundred ships transit the waters around the reef every day. The reef is also next to massive industrial sites like Jurong Island and Pulau Bukom, and opposite Singapore's container terminals. With abundant seagrass meadows and other marine life, Cyrene is a natural wonder. As the day progressed and the sun got higher, so did the heat and humidity. Ria bought her umbrella along for protection while Siti, Wei Ling and Shufen headed for the water to cool off!

Cyrene Reef: 24 March 2007

NParks Biodiversity Centre: 24 March 2007

On the afternoon post Cyrene Reef, Seagrass-Watch HQ together with TeamSeagrass and NParks Singapore, held a Seagrass training workshop. Len (SGW HQ) and Siti (TSG) gave a number of presentations on seagrass identification, ecology, importance, threats and Seagrass-Watch. Siti also presented some of the TeamSeagrass preliminary findings. The afternoon attracted not only a lot of interested participants, but also the local media.

Pulau Semakau: 25 March 2007

The field component to the workshop on the 24th was a trip to Pulau Semakau. Pulau Semakau is located to the south of mainland Singapore, off the Straits of Singapore. The island

was formed by the amalgamation of the then much smaller Pulau Semakau and Pulau Sakeng. Pulau Semakau is Singapore's first offshore landfill and now the only remaining landfill in Singapore. Semakau Landfill is filled mainly with inert ash produced by Singapore's four incineration plants, which incinerate the country's waste, shipped there in a covered barge (to prevent the ash from get blown into the air) every night. Team Seagrass has 3 sites located on the island. A 40min boat trip from the mainland, then a short bus ride and a quick trek through a dense tropical forest, brings you to the sites.

Great Sandy Strait: 17-18 March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Seagrass-Watch HQ visited Great Sandy Strait and caught up with the Seagrass-Watch Group, Great Sandy Strait Fauna & Flora Watch (GSSF&FW: Gordon Cottle, Pat Cottle, Robyn Bailey and Hanne Laresen) in the region. Tinnanbar and Pelican Bay sites were monitored. The GSSF&FW were also the proud recipients of the The Burnett Mary NRM Coastal Community Award for 2007.

Townsville: 18 March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Seagrass-Watch HQ held a workshop on the 18th March in Townsville, due to increasing interest in the program. The workshop was presented by Jane Mellors and Naomi Smith (Seagrass-Watch HQ), and included presentations on seagrass biology, ecology and the Seagrass-Watch program. A field session followed.

PUBLICATIONS

TeamSeagrass Singapore training workshop proceedings: 24th – 25th March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#Proceedings>

McKenzie, L.J., Yaakub, S.M., and Yoshida, R.L. (2007). Seagrass-Watch: Guidelines for TeamSeagrass Singapore Participants. Proceedings of a training workshop, National Parks Board, Biodiversity Centre, Singapore, 24th – 25th March 2007 (DPI&F, Cairns). 32pp. (944kb)

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Philippines: 9-10th of April 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

FROM HQ

Virtual Herbarium <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/herbarium.html>

Giveaways <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html#GIVE1>

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Manual for Assessing Fish Stocks on Pacific Corral Reefs (only 1 left)
- Seagrass Biology
- Bookmarks
- Stickers

Future sampling dates <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 28 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

Handy Seagrass Links <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/links.html>

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Seagrass-Watch Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.