Seagrass-Watch HQ

From: Seagrass-Watch HQ [hq@seagrasswatch.org]
Sent: Sunday, 22 April 2007 7:36 PM
To: Seagrass-Watch HQ
Subject: SEAGRASS-WATCH BULLETIN - 22 April 2007

SEAGRASS-WATCH E- BULLETIN

22 April 2007

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.
www.seagrasswatch.org

IN THIS BULLETIN

NEWS

Researchers, Industry, Government to Review Status of North Queensland Ecosystems (Queensland, Australia)

April 16, 2007

Many of Australia's leading environmental scientists, mathematicians and social scientists converged in Townsville this week to review the state of North Queensland's key ecosystems. The researchers were developing new ways for Australia to look after its priceless natural assets such as the Wet Tropics rainforests and Great Barrier Reef which are under pressure from the effects of climate change, increased use and rapid economic growth in the region.

The inaugural Research Synthesis Conference of the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) will be held 16-20 April. The MTSRF is a $40 million Australian Government initiative aimed at researching and protecting the Great Barrier Reef, Wet Tropics and the Torres Strait.

This first meeting brings together a unique combination of experts and will highlight impacts of and responses to climate change on tropical rainforests and the reef, the impacts of water quality on the reef, the changes measured since the introduction of the Great Barrier Reef Zoning Plan, and the impacts of increasing population pressure on our World Heritage listed environments. The Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility is represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC)....*more*
http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

Land clearing, sand mining affect rivers (Persekutuan,Malaysia)

April 16, 2007, New Straits Times

JOHOR BARU: Rampant land clearing and sand mining have made Kota Tinggi prone to flash floods. With over 100 tributaries converging into Sungai Johor, which cuts through this historical town, it is prone to flooding whenever there is excessive rain. It bursts the river's banks and inundates the town.

Dr Noor Baharim Hashim, a professor at the Department of Hydraulics and Hydrology in the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, said the research team's concerns were not only about flash floods but also about the aftermath of a flood. "An increase in the inflow of freshwater into the estuarine areas will affect the aquatic life for up to three weeks," said Noor Baharim. He said the nutrient level of the water samples collected from the Straits of Johor showed there was a risk of algal bloom in the region. "There is increasing concern about the oversupply of nutrients from multiple sources at the Sungai Johor estuary. This has ecological effects on the shallow coastal and estuarine areas." The effects include a loss of aquatic habitat and seagrass, an essential food for dugong and herbivorous fish.

Noor Baharim said the authorities could adopt best management practices (BMP), which included building buffer zones and ponds to eradicate flash flood woes. A research programme to monitor the water quality and velocity is also vital, as an efficient flood warning system can predict a flood two days in advance. Noor Baharim said land-clearing activities should not be carried out , especially during the monsoon period. ....*more*
http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

Villagers to reap benefits of resource project (Suva, Fiji)

April 12, 2007, by Amelia Vunileba, Fiji Times

Community projects are often taken on with passion by those involved and many will say it is a fulfilling initiative to partake in. Six villages took part in a district project on the island of Gau in the Lomaiviti Province and have been rewarded for their hard work on their resource management project.

Called the Mositi Vanuaso Project, initial planning stages of this community initiative started in 2001 and got off to a start in 2002. This is an environmental project which encourages villagers to manage their environmental resources to ensure there is something for future generations. Their efforts have been recognised and have been awarded the National Energy Globe Award for Fiji.

University of the South Pacific academic, Dr Joeli Veitayaki, who hails from Gau, has been involved in the project since it started in 2001 and is very proud of the changes that have come about as a result of the project. Dr Veitayaki says discussions on the project started in 2001 after the women in the six villages of the Vanuaso district found that fish numbers had decreased....*more* http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

Legal limits needed for nitrogen levels in Barnegat Bay (Asbury Park,NJ,USA)
April 21, 2007, by Kirk Moore, Asbury Park Press

Establishing legal limits for nitrogen-based nutrient levels in Barnegat Bay and its tributary streams is an imperative first step if there's to be any hope for restoring the estuary's battered ecosystem, a Rutgers University scientist says in a newly issued report. "The most immediate need for the Barnegat Bay-Little Egg Harbor estuarine system is the reduction of nitrogen loading," research scientist Michael J. Kennish wrote. "Long-term ecosystem improvement can only be achieved by reducing nitrogen inputs to the estuary."

Starting up a comprehensive monitoring of the bay's seagrass beds and microscopic plant life, called phytoplankton, will help track the impact of nitrogen overloading, Kennish says in the report, "Barnegat Bay-Little Egg Harbor Estuary: Ecosystem Condition and Recommendations," which was submitted to the Barnegat Bay Estuary Program.

Finally, the bay needs a comprehensive survey of its animal life, especially the bottom-dwelling, or benthic, community, which hasn't been fully studied in almost 40 years, Kennish wrote. Kennish is the chief Barnegat Bay investigator at the Rutgers Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences. Earlier this year, he and fellow scientists issued a report warning that over enrichment of bay waters with nitrogen compounds has been fuelling excessive algae blooms and reducing underwater seagrass meadows.

Source & full story: http://www.app.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070421/NEWS03/704210330/1007

Talayeru may obtain mañahak permits for Piti Bomb Holes (Hagåtña,GU,USA)
April 13, 2007, Pacific Daily News

The Department of Agriculture has issued a special permit to allow the catch of juvenile rabbit fish (mañahak) within the Piti Bomb Holes Preserve. Fishing normally is not allowed between Asan Point and the Piti channel, which are the boundaries of the Piti Bomb Holes Marine Preserve, but for the next several days, net-throwing fishermen have permission to try their luck at catching mañahak and achemson.

Mañahak are seasonal fish that are not regular reef residents, so the Department of Agriculture does not object to those fish being caught, conservation officials have said. But residents need permission to fish in the preserves, which were created a decade ago in response to the shrinking numbers and smaller sizes of reef fish.

To catch mañahak, officials at the Guam Department of Agriculture's Division of Wildlife Resources have place several conditions which fishermen must follow, including that Talaya nets should not be thrown onto seagrass bed areas or live corals. The Department of Agriculture's conservation officers will fully enforce all laws and regulations in the preserve.

Source & full story: http://www.guampdn.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?

AID=/20070413/NEWS01/704130334/1002

State rewrites manatee plan (Daytona,FL,USA)
April 13, 2007, Daytona Beach News-Journal

State officials have rewritten a proposed manatee management plan, hoping to underscore their commitment to the popular marine mammals. The first draft plan, released by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission last fall, sparked controversy by admitting there was a 12 percent chance of a 50 percent decline in the manatee population in the future. The new version restates the goal, saying the agency wants to reduce that chance to a 1 percent chance of a 50 percent decline.
The commission also added a commitment to protect seagrass, the primary source of food for manatees.

The plan also includes objectives to improve the methods used to estimate manatee populations, continue working to minimize human-related manatee deaths and to work with electric utilities to plan to prevent manatee deaths if the utilities shut down any of the warm water outfalls now used by the animals during the winter.

The commission has voted to move the manatee from endangered to threatened, but a management plan must be approved before the change can take effect. Written comments will be accepted beginning May 7 and the commission is expected to vote on the plan in September.

Source & full story: http://www.news-journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/News/Enviro/envENV01041307.htm

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consider removing manatees from endangered list (Miami, FL, USA)
April 9, 2007, The Florida Times Union

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering upgrading the manatee's status from endangered to threatened, a move that would indicate the animal has rebounded from the brink of extinction. The manatee would still remain protected under the federal Endangered Species Act, making it illegal to harass, poach or kill the animals.

Source & full text: http://www.jacksonville.com/apnews/stories/040907/D8OD2NR00.shtml

Solomon's quake lifts island 3m out of sea (Solomon Islands)
April 8, 2007, ABC news online

The seismic jolt that unleashed the deadly Solomon's tsunami this week lifted an entire island metres out of the sea,
destroying some of the world's most pristine coral reefs. In an instant, the grinding of the Earth's tectonic plates in the
8.0 magnitude earthquake on Monday forced the island of Ranongga up three metres. Submerged reefs that once attracted scuba
divers from around the globe lie exposed and dying after the quake raised the mountainous landmass, which is 32 kilometres
long and eight kilometres wide.....*more* http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

Threat to a gentle giant (Belize)
April 8, 2007, Sky News

For centuries manatees, or sea cows, have been associated with myths and mysteries around the world. But now this gentle sea mammal is fast becoming an endangered animal. The trouble is the creature's natural environment is also becoming increasingly attractive to tourists who bring with them powerful boats and other water craft.

Scars from boat propellers Dr James Powell from the Wildlife Trust who leads a team of conservationists trying to save the creatures from being endangered says: "When you think about how fast powerboats travel, between 40 and 70 miles an hour, Manatees simply don't get a chance to get out of the way.

Sharing the manatee's home here in the Belizean jungle is the British Army. But between training commitments, the hardware and many soldiers turn their attention towards helping capture wild manatee as part of the conservation project. British Army helicopter pilot Richard Robinson says: "As you know these creatures are bottom feeders so they feed on seagrass. "From the helicopter we can see the tracks in the grass where the manatees have been eating. Manatees tracked from the air "You can virtually follow those tracks and more likely or not they will lead us to the animals. It's literally like following a railway line."

Source & full text: http://news.sky.com/skynews/article/0,,30000-1259643,00.html

Reef's Future looking Bleak (Australia)
April 7, 2007, Cairns Post

T he Great Barrier Reef faces a colourless future if the Australian Government does not act quickly, a new report by conservation group WWF warns. The report singles out 10 micro-regions across the globe already being affected by climate change and warns of bleak futures if action is not taken.....*more* http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

Australian minister says Great Barrier Reef's survival cannot be assured (Australia)
April 7, 2007, The Associated Press

The Australian government will do everything it can to prevent the demise of the Great Barrier Reef due to global warming, the environment minister said Saturday after a U.N. committee found its survival was in doubt by 2030.....*more* http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

EPA objects to Taylor marina (Tallahassee,FL,USA)
April 6, 2007, By Bruce Ritchie, Tallahassee Democrat

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has come out against a proposed marina in Taylor County that already faces intense environmental opposition. Secret Promise Ltd. and Dr. J. Crayton Pruitt are proposing to scoop out 26 acres of the salt marsh and to fill in almost 9 acres for a marina. They also propose dredging a two-mile long channel offshore through the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve.

Developer Chuck Olson said the agency's comments came before Secret Promise submitted a plan for managing and protection seagrass in the area. He said the plan should convince agencies to support the project. Environmental groups have lined up in opposition to the project while Taylor County business groups are supporting it as a boost for local tourism. More than 1,000 comments in opposition to the project have been submitted to the Corps of Engineers, said Ed Sarfert, senior project manager in the agency's Pensacola field office.

Source & full story: http://www.tallahassee.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070406/BREAKINGNEWS/704060363

Great Barrier Reef faces decimation: WWF (Australia)
April 5, 2007, Sydney Morning Herald

"Essentially what we're saying is there's a certain amount of warming locked in which will result in more frequent and probably more severe bleaching events into the future," Mr Leck said. "Australia cannot expect other nations to help save the reef." .....*more* http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

DPI&F on the hop over seagrass (Queensland, Australia)
April 5, 2007.RRRC media release

Comprehensive seagrass surveys have been completed as part of a program to monitor the state of this vital fish habitat area between Hinchinbrook Island and Cape Bowling Green. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) “hopped” from site to site in a helicopter at low tide using GPS to map the status of seagrass.

DPI&F fisheries biologist Helen Taylor said a detailed baseline survey around southern Hinchinbrook Island and the Herbert River mouth was conducted during the low tide last week. “This is an important catchment area with major fisheries habitats,” Ms Taylor said. “The seagrass meadows in this area support a large dugong population.” “It is important to collect information on these seagrass habitats as they face threats from a range of sources including climate change, pollution and coastal development.” The survey covered Halifax Bay, Cleveland Bay and down to Bowling Green Bay south of Townsville as well.....*more*
http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html

Deadly jellyfish heading our way (Australia)
April 5, 2007, by Richard Macey, The Sydney Morning Herald

CLIMATE change has dramatically altered the ocean current flowing down Australia's east coast, sending water temperatures soaring, rearranging the distribution of sea life and making the water more acidic. By 2070, CSIRO marine biologists warned yesterday, NSW could have dugongs frolicking off the coast - and box jellyfish wreaking havoc on tourism.

Source & full story: http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/deadly-jellyfish-heading-our-way/2007/04/04/1175366325696.html

---

GALLERY

Magnetic Island (Qld): 19 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Picnic Bay, MI1
Cockle Bay, MI2

Mission Beach (Qld): 17-18 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Lugger Bay: 17 April 2007
RWQPP monitoring in the Far North moved south to Lugger Bay, Mission Beach, where LB1 and LB2 were monitored. Lugger Bay seagrass was severely impacted from the effects of TC Larry in March 2006. The excellent weather, and lowest tides of the month were ideal for monitoring, as Lugger Bay has proven difficult to monitor during previous sampling events if the elements are not ideal.
Dunk Island: 18 April 2007

Whitsunday's (Qld): 16-17 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Hamilton Island: 16 April 2007
Pioneer Bay: 17 April 2007

Cairns (Qld): 15-16 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Yule Point: 15 April 2007
With the start of RWQPP monitoring for 2007, Yule Point sites YP1 and YP2 were monitored on Sunday. Seagrass-Watch HQ, with help from Masao and Nicolette Yoshida (who monitor CW1

and CW2, Cawaci, Fiji), monitored and completed both sites at Yule Point in good time.
Green Island: 16 April 2007
RWQPP monitoring continued in the Far North, with Green Island's two sites GI1 and GI2 next on the schedule. With a low tide at 1430 and excellent conditions, the team of 4 completed the monitoring in record time.

Sarina (Qld): 15 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Townsville (Qld): 14 -15 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Bushland Beach: 14 April 2007
Shelly Beach: 15 April 2007

Bolinao (Philippines): 9-10 April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

As part of the UNEP/GEF South China Sea Project, a Seagrass-Watch training workshop was hosted by the Bolinao Seagrass Demonstration Site at the University of the Philippines' Bolinao Marine Laboratory with the assistance of Seagrass-Watch HQ. The project recognises the ecological and economic roles of seagrasses in Bolinao, and that the maintenance of their ecology and integrity will, in both the long and short term contribute to uplifting the lives of the citizens of this municipality. Approximately 30 local participants attended. The workshop gave the participants a thorough understanding of seagrass ecosystems, improved their capacity to monitor their seagrass resources, and empowered them to take ownership of their local marine resources and take a role in initiatives to protect, conserve and maintain the resources.

Sanur (Bali, Indonesia): 29 March 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Seagrass-Watch HQ visited Bali in late March to monitor the Sanur site, however, due to unfavourable tides and a fierce tropical storm (torrential rain and lightning), the site could not be monitored.

PUBLICATIONS

Bolinao, Philippines training workshop proceedings: 9th – 10th April 2007 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#Proceedings

McKenzie, L.J. (2007). Seagrass-Watch: Guidelines for Philippine Participants. Proceedings of a training workshop, Bolinao Marine Laboratory, University of the Philippines, 9th – 10th April 2007 (DPI&F, Cairns). 36pp. (970kb)

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
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (hardcopy)

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

****

DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this bulletin are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Queensland Government. News articles posted as a free community service for the purposes of non-commercial education, research and study; review and the reporting of news; and archived for reference of students and researchers as a 'fair dealing' activity under Australian Copyright Law.

Seagrass-Watch is supported by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of the Environment and Water Resources) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (EPA), the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries and by private donations.

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