



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

24 October 2009

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Abbreviated articles are presented with links to their source. Seagrass-Watch HQ recommends that readers exercise their own skill and care with respect to their use of the information in this bulletin and that readers carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance of the material in the bulletin for their purposes. You are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

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NEWS

Marine plant life holds the secret to preventing global warming (United Kingdom)

14 October 2009, Frank Pope, Ocean Correspondent, TimesOnline

Life in the ocean has the potential to help to prevent global warming, according to a report published today.

Marine plant life sucks 2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year, but most of the plankton responsible never reaches the seabed to become a permanent carbon store.

Mangrove forests, salt marshes and seagrass beds are a different matter. Although together they cover less than 1 per cent of the world's seabed, they lock away well over half of all carbon to be buried in the ocean floor. They are estimated to store 1,650 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year — nearly half of global transport emissions — making them one of the most intense carbon sinks on Earth.

Their capacity to absorb the emissions is under threat, however: the habitats are being lost at a rate of up to 7 per cent a year, up to 15 times faster than the tropical rainforests. A third have already been lost.

Halting their destruction could be one of the easiest ways of reducing future emissions, says report, Blue Carbon, a UN collaboration.

The potential contribution of blue carbon sinks has been ignored up to now, says the report, which was a collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and Unesco. Accurate figures for the extent of these habitats are hard to obtain, and may be more than twice the lower estimates used in the report.

"The carbon burial capacity of marine vegetated habitats is phenomenal, 180 times greater than the average burial rate in the open ocean," say the authors. As a result they lock away between 50 and 70 per cent of the organic carbon in the ocean.

To protect them the authors suggest that a Blue Carbon Fund be launched to help developing nations to protect the habitats. Oceanic carbon sinks should also be traded in the same fashion as terrestrial forests, they say. Together with the UN's scheme to reduce deforestation, they could deliver up to 25 per cent of emission reductions needed to keep global warming below 2C (36F).

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

related stories <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS196682+15-Oct-2009+BW20091015>

http://www.australia.to/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15173:healthy-oceans-new-key-to-combating-climate-change-unep-&catid=58:latest-world&Itemid=287

<http://www.tolerance.ca/Article.aspx?ID=61275&L=fr>

<http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/un-says-oceans-could-help-curb-climate-change-risks-2009101536413.html>

Qld approves new 'putrid' Barrier Reef run-off laws (Queensland, Australia)

09 October 2009, ABC online(Australia)

Queensland's Parliament has passed legislation last night to reduce run-off from farming land on to the Great Barrier Reef. The State Government wants to halve the amount of fertiliser and pesticides entering the reef in four years requiring some landholders to change their practices. Those who do not cooperate face a maximum fine of \$30,000.

The Opposition was angry that earlier parliamentary debate was guillotined and fought unsuccessfully to amend the Bill until late last night. Queensland Sustainability Minister Kate Jones says the legislation will be phased in from January. "I will now allow them [farmers] - in regard to chemical application - to have an extra nine months to get that in place," she said.

North Queensland MP Shane Knuth says farmers have been demonised. "This issue of nutrients of farmers that are killing the Great Barrier Reef - the evidence of the scientists proves that it's just a fable, it's a myth," he said. "The Bligh Government's approach in demonising farmers to seek to reward the radical green extremists."

However, Labor MP Jason O'Brien told Parliament that the State Government values agriculture. "We are not saying that farmers have not been stewards of the land adjoining the Great Barrier Reef for generations and have not managed that land responsibly and diligently," he said. "It is the farmers themselves who acknowledge that not all farmers apply the same sustainable techniques."

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

Blue Carbon Report to Highlight the Importance of Healthy Oceans (United Kingdom)

06 October 2009 , United Nations Environment Programme (Cape Town)

The world's oceans, seas and marine ecosystems, such as seagrass, salt marshes and coastal wetlands, are daily absorbing and removing large quantities of carbon from the atmosphere. They are a crucial - and perhaps overlooked - natural ally in strategies to combat climate change.

The Blue Carbon report, compiled in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), puts some hard figures on the carbon capturing potential of the marine environment and on the impact of marine degradation on climate change. It also outlines the way markets might begin paying developing countries for conserving and enhancing the marine environment's carbon capture and storage services (CCS) and the links between healthy oceans and adaptation to climate change.

Currently, several developed countries are considering spending billions of dollar on CCS at power stations while the CCS services of natural systems, such as the seas and oceans, are tested and probably more cost effective. The report is launched some 60 days ahead of the crucial UN climate convention meeting in Copenhagen.

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

DEC Seeks Input on Disappearance of Coastal Seagrass (Albany, NY, USA)

22 October 2009, ReadMedia (press release)

A draft report that presents recommendations for the management of New York's declining coastal seagrasses was released today for public review and input, state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Pete Grannis announced. The report and upcoming public meetings will provide assessments of current seagrass populations and management recommendations to protect and restore this critical marine habitat.

While historic seagrass acreage in New York has not been documented, old photographs and records indicate that there may have been as much as 200,000 acres in 1930; today, only 21,803 acres remain.

The draft "Report of the New York State Seagrass Task Force: Recommendations to the New York State Governor and Legislature" is now available for review at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4932.html> on DEC's website. The recommendations include reducing nutrient discharges to coastal and marine waters which directly and indirectly threaten seagrass health, increasing public awareness of the importance of seagrasses, and establishing water quality standards to protect seagrass habitat.

Full story and source: <http://readme.readmedia.com/news/show/DEC-Seeks-Input-on-Disappearance-of-Coastal-Seagrass/972324>

\$1.25million allocated to improve Vasse Wonnerup waterways (Western Australia)

22 October 2009, BYM News (press release)

The State Government has allocated \$1.25million to improve the environmental health of the Vasse Wonnerup waterways and help protect the environmental values of Geographe Bay. Works recommended by the Vasse Wonnerup Water Quality Improvement Plan will commence immediately.

Activities will include on-ground works to significantly reduce nutrient flow into the waterways flowing into the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands and will help protect the Geographe Bay seagrass meadows from impacts of high nutrient levels.

Water Minister Graham Jacobs said the health of the internationally recognised Vasse Wonnerup wetlands was a priority for the Government. "The implementation of the water quality improvement plan will go some way to rectifying nutrient impacts because if we don't act now, these systems will continue to suffer algal blooms and associated fish kills." The Minister said there were key aspects of the plan that would be implemented in the next 12 months.

Dr Jacobs said the Department of Water would be the agency responsible for the overall project, however delivery of project components would predominantly be undertaken by the community-based Geographe Catchment Council (Geocatch).

Full story and source: <http://www.bymnews.com/news/newsDetails.php?id=61773>

Give Up on Construction of New US Military Base in Okinawa (New York, NY, USA)

13 October 2009, by Akahata, Political Affairs Magazine

Okinawa's Environmental Impact Assessment Council has advised Okinawa Governor Nakaima Hirokazu to request that the Defense Ministry recompile its documents laying out methods for the environmental impact assessment regarding the plan to construct a U.S. air base in the Henoko district of Nago City for the U.S. Marine Corps.

The national government must take Okinawans' opposition to the plan and the latest council report seriously and refrain from pressing the local government to accept any illegally compiled environmental impact assessment for the construction of the new U.S. base. The report even suggests cancellation of the air base construction. The Defense Ministry said that the environmental impact of the air base construction will be small, but the Council has expressed a view to the contrary.

Also, the Council report points out that the Defense Ministry's preparatory documents are "inadequate" and that a reexamination is necessary. The environmental impact assessment of how the base construction would affect the endangered dugong was also carried out in an inaccurate manner. Without conducting a multi-year environmental impact assessment study on the dugong as called for by the Okinawan governor, the preparatory document stated that dugong "don't use" seagrass beds in the sea off the Henoko District. The preparatory document was drawn up based on the assessment method document which contained numerous flaws.

Full story and source: <http://www.politicalaffairs.net/article/articleview/9088/>

Related article: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20091019a4.html> , <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20091020a3.html>

New no-anchor zone in Studland Bay (Dorset, UK)

13 October 2009, Yachting Monthly

The Crown Estate and Natural England have announced the implementation of a voluntary no-anchor zone in a small part of Studland Bay, Dorset. The zone is part of a study of the effects of boat anchoring and moorings on the health of seagrass and associated marine life in the Bay. The zone will be identified on Admiralty Charts.

Spiny and short-snouted seahorses live in the Studland Bay seagrass meadows. These seahorses are now a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which new status has caused the examination of the possible negative effects of leisure boating. The zone should provide useful results to aid future management.

SeaStar Survey will undertake the study, overseen by representatives of The Crown Estate, Natural England, the Royal Yachting Association and the Chair of the Studland Seagrass and Seahorse Study Group (SSSSG). The zone will be in operation until at least autumn 2011.

Full story and source: <http://www.yachtingmonthly.com/auto/newsdesk/20090913124910ymnews.html>

Related article: http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/4679865.Keep_anchors_away_to_save_our_seahorses/

Dealing with climate change dangerous impacts (Jakarta, Indonesia)

14 October 2009, Fitriani Ardiansyah and Ari Muhammad, Jakarta Post

Climate change is a grave threat to the economies, societies and natural environment of all countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Indonesia. Overall in Indonesia, the observed and projected impacts of climate change include an increase in the severity of droughts, flooding, fires, coral bleaching, the gradual rise of sea levels, and the increase in frequency of extreme weather conditions including storms, which will be destroying natural and human-made systems in the area. Hundreds of millions of people live in Indonesia, most of who depend on resources, goods and services for their livelihood. However, climate change will profoundly affect biodiversity, water resources and the economy in the country, all of which in turn will impact its people.

The challenge that the government faces is finding ways to devise climate-smart development strategies that ensure the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation in the country's development agenda. Cooperation among countries at the regional level is essential and coordination among sectors and different levels of government is pivotal for successful adaptation initiatives. At the regional level, for instance, the creation of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) by six countries in the Asia Pacific is a good starting point for addressing climate adaptation in marine and coastal areas.

Effective management of coastal resources through a range of options including locally managed regional networks of marine protected areas, protection of mangrove and seagrass beds and effective management of fisheries would contribute to a slower decline in coastal and marine resources as well as an increase in the resilience of coastal communities and the marine sector overall.

Full story and source: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/10/13/dealing-with-climate-change-dangerous-impacts.html>

Sea cows disappearing from Gulf of Mannar (Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India)

13 Oct 2009, S Raja, Express Buzz

Commonly known as the sea cow, *Dugong dugon* fights for survival in Indian waters, especially near the Gulf of Mannar region. Their numbers have been dwindling due to an increase in fishing with banned equipment. Environmentalists have urged the Centre to take steps to announce the sea cow, an endangered species, a national animal, just as it had decided to declare the freshwater dolphin a national water animal at a recent meeting in New Delhi

In 1990, the Western Indian Ocean Dugong Research Programme was launched. In an aerial survey conducted as part of the programme, it was revealed that the dugongs had become extinct in Seychelles, Mauritius and Tanzania. The population has also come down considerably in the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Mannar area. These herbivores can be found in the Gulf of Mannar, the Gulf of Kutch and the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Indian Ocean.

The increase in the number of boats, using banned nets, indulging in dynamite fishing and other illegal activities have caused a massive destruction of this marine species. Some people are said to hunt these docile creatures as its meat is believed to cure several diseases. The dugong's bones and tusks are also used as jewellery in some countries. Gulf of Mannar National Marine Park sources told Express that if steps were not taken at the earliest to protect these sea creatures in the Gulf of Mannar region, they would soon become extinct here.

Full story and source:

<http://www.expressbuzz.com/edition/story.aspx?Title=Sea+cows++disappearing+from+Gulf+of+Mannar&artid=r/N/9pcB9/g=&SectionID=vBlkz7JCFvA=&MainSectionID=fyV9T2jla4A=&SectionName=EL7znOtxBM3qzqMyXZKtxw==&SEO=>

Capital centre will protect dugong (United Arab Emirates)

13 October 2009, National - Abu Dhabi

It is the cow of the sea: almost half a tonne of slow-moving mammal, a defenceless giant that spends its life feeding ponderously on seagrass. And although its numbers are now much depleted, some 7,000 endangered dugongs still roam the waters of the Arabian Gulf. The only place there are more is off the northern shores of Australia. Now Abu Dhabi plans to set up a new regional wildlife centre to protect the remaining population.

An agreement between the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) means an office dedicated to the conservation of dugongs, as well as the region's native migratory birds of prey, will open in the capital. It will be the only one of its kind to focus on these species, Elizabeth Mrema, the UNEP's officer-in-charge, said yesterday, after signing a donor agreement with the agency.

From now until 2011, the outpost will preside over more than 47 member countries that have adopted memoranda of understanding on protecting dugongs. The unit, which will operate independent of the EAD but within its premises,

will also monitor the actions of 104 member states that have agreed to act to protect migratory birds in Africa and Eurasia.

Majid al Mansouri, the secretary general of the EAD, said the centre was a natural fit for Abu Dhabi, as the presence of dugongs in the Arabian Gulf has long been intertwined with the country's marine heritage. Traditionally, the mammals, which can grow to about three metres long and weigh as much as 400kg, – were hunted for their red meat and oil. Today, they are protected by federal law from being exploited and sold. The 4,200 sq km Marawah islands reserve is the largest protected area in the Gulf and is a sanctuary for more than half of the region's dugongs.

Full story and source: <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091013/NATIONAL/710129850/1040/opinion>

Yacht Tours contests Rf13 million fine (Maldives)

06 October 2009, Minivan News

Tourism magnate Abdulla Jabir is contesting a Rf13 million (US\$1 million) fine for development activities carried out without an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), arguing the fine is politically motivated. Speaking to Minivan News today, the Yacht Tours owner said he had written to the environment minister denying any wrongdoing during the development of Vatavereha resort.

Ahmed Nilaam, head of the legal department at the environment protection agency The (EPA), said the fine was not discriminatory and had been imposed for sand mining and excavation without an EIA. He further alleged Yacht Tours had mined sand and groundwater for construction purposes.

Nilaam said the fine was now on hold, while the EPA sought legal advice from the attorney general's office about how to proceed. Failure to carry out EIAs resulted in serious environmental destruction, he said. While pumps sucked up everything indiscriminately, including seagrass, excavators crushed anything they came upon. Taking groundwater also requires an EIA as it could lead to the depletion of the underwater lens if removed at an unsustainable rate, he added. "There is a loss of living organisms, habitats are destroyed and it causes beach erosion," said Nilaam.

Full story and source: http://www.minivannews.com/news_detail.php?id=7415

State to enforce new seagrass rule (USA)

05 October 2009, Tampa Tribune

TALLAHASSEE - State law officers will soon begin enforcing new rules targeting those that intentionally damage seagrass. Under new legislation aimed at protecting seagrass in aquatic preserves, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission will first educate boaters, then begin citing them for the non-criminal infraction.

Seagrass scarring results when boats damage or destroy the plants' roots, shoots or stems. The scarring is commonly referred to as prop scars. "I can't emphasize enough how important seagrass is to marine life," said Capt. Mark Warren of the FWC. "Approximately 80 percent of Florida's fisheries species spend at least part of their life cycles in seagrass. If you like to fish, or like seafood, you should like and preserve seagrass."

Those cited for intentionally destroying seagrass will receive a \$50 citation for the first offense, a \$250 fine for the second offense within 12 months, and \$500 for the third offense. Anyone receiving a fourth citation within 72 months will be fined \$1,000, Warren said.

Full story and source: <http://southtampa2.tbo.com/content/2009/oct/05/state-enforce-new-seagrass-rule/>

Related articles: <http://www.sportfishingmag.com/news/news/florida-authorities-to-enforce-new-sea-grass-protection-rule-1000076931.html>
: <http://www.floridasportsman.com/casts/091005/>

Nitrogen limits will help bay (USA)

30 September 2009, Tampa Tribune

ST. PETERSBURG - A meeting of the minds among business and government leaders whose actions affect the health of Tampa Bay will help keep the estuary on a road to recovery. The group came together years ago to reverse the damage done to the bay by massive doses of nitrogen and other pollutants. And it has been working.

A plan two years in the making limits the amount of nitrogen flowing into the bay from phosphate companies, water treatment plants and the like, to today's level. The limits would stay in place through 2012. Any new nitrogen produced by stakeholders as a result of growth will have to be offset using pollution controls.

What that means for the bay is better water quality and clarity, which in turn, means more seagrasses - underwater lawns that serve as nursery grounds for young sea life and feeding grounds for others, such as manatees. A healthier bay also means better fishing grounds for residents and visitors who venture into the bay for snook, redfish and other tasty sea life.

Once every government agency and business signs off on the plan, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will convert the voluntary nitrogen limits into permit requirements

Full story and source: <http://southshore2.tbo.com/content/2009/sep/30/ss-nitrogen-limits-will-help-bay/>

CONFERENCES

CERF 2009 (Oregon, USA, 1 -5 November 2009)

Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Conference (CERF) will host a seagrass program titled, "Seagrass Ecosystem Health in a Global Perspective". Seagrass Ecosystem Health in a Global Perspective will include four half day sessions:

- Seagrass Physiological Stress: In Sickness and in Health (SCI-108)
- Seagrass Assessment: Think Globally, Monitor Locally (SCI-105)
- Seagrass Ecological Health: Diagnosing the Canary (SCI-106)
- Seagrass Management and Policy: Proactive Sustainability (SCI-107)

More information: <http://erf.org/cerf2009/>

ICSED2009 (Trang, Thailand, 2 – 4 December 2009)

International Conference on Seagrass Ecology and Dugong 2009: "Rehabilitation & Sustainability"

The conference will focus on current seagrass ecology issues and sustainable small-scale seagrass fisheries. The conference will contribute to the resolution of important issues which are threatening to both humans and seagrass aquatic organisms. The attendees are expected to share a viewpoint of global seagrass management based on their own backgrounds and experience. Conference topics will include:

1. seagrass biodiversity and ecosystem functioning
2. consequences of seagrass biodiversity change
3. conservation of seagrass biodiversity and dugong
4. integrated coastal management and governance mechanisms

Important dates:

30 September 2009: Deadline for abstract submission

15 October 2009: Deadline for early registration

31 October 2009: Deadline for full paper submission

More information: <http://icsed2009.rmutsv.ac.th/index.html>

World Seagrass Conference & ISBW9 (Thailand, November 2010)

A World Seagrass Conference (WSC) and the 9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) will take place in southern Thailand in November, 2010. The region features fascinating seagrass ecosystems; Phuket is a world-renowned diving area and Trang has Thailand's largest seagrass meadows. Both the WSC and ISBW9 will be hosted by Prince of Songkla University, Southern Thailand.

World Seagrass Conference (WSC) (Phuket, 21–25 November, 2010)

Open to all and will include invited plenary lectures and oral and poster presentations. The expected cost for WSC is US\$200 which includes registration, lunches, two dinners and a half-day field trip to the seagrass meadow in Phuket (hotel and travel are separate).

9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) (Trang, 27–30 November, 2010)

ISBW9 will follow the WSC and consist of a smaller group of participants, including both international seagrass experts and regional scientists and practitioners, to address problems of seagrass conservation and restoration, which so far are little known across Southeast Asia and South Asia. The expected cost for the workshop is US\$350, which includes travel to Trang from Phuket, lunches, two dinners and a full day excursion to the nearby seagrass meadow (again, hotel and travel separate).

If you are interested in WSC and/or ISBW9, please respond by filling out the short **Call for Interest** form available from

<http://isbw.seagrassonline.org/isbw9/>

Important Dates for the WSC and ISBW9

August 2009	First Announcement, Call for Interest
November 2009	Second Announcement (including themes and a preliminary programme) and Registration Opens
March 2010	Abstract Submission Deadline
June 2010	Notification of Abstract Acceptance for Oral or Poster Presentations, Updated Programme
July 2010	Registration Closes
August 2010	Final Programme Announcement
21–25 November 2010	WSC in Phuket, Southern Thailand
27–30 November 2010	ISBW-9 in Trang, Southern Thailand

GALLERY

Pulau Semakau (Singapore): 18 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

*Today, the *Enhalus acoroides* were blooming! The Scouts are attached to the Team to help do the monitoring. We had a low turn out of the Team this trip, so it was a godsend to have the extra help. And we hope the Scouts had a good experience learning and discovering about our seagrasses.*

Central Qld (Australia): 15 - 18 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Shoalwater Bay: 15-16 October 2009

Great Keppel: 17 - 18 October 2009

Whitsunday (Qld, Australia): 14 - 16 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Pioneer Bay: 14 October 2009

Hamilton Is: 15 October 2009

Sarina: 16 October 2009

Hideaway and Dingo : 15-16 October 2009

Torres Strait (Qld, Australia): 14 - 17 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Thursday Is: 14-15 October 2009

Hammond Is: 16 October 2009

Horn Is: 17 October 2009

Gladstone (Qld, Australia): 03 - 05 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Rodds Bay : 03-04 October 2009

Gladstone: 05 October 2009

Cairns (Far Nth Qld, Australia): 02 - 03 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Green Island : G11 & G12: 02 October 2009

Yule Point: YP1 & YP2: 03 October 2009

Cooktown (Far Nth Qld, Australia): 01 - 02 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Archer Point : 01-02 October 2009

FROM HQ

Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/faq.html>

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 37 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

Seagrass-Watch Shop <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html>

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

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

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

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

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Seagrass-Watch HQ is supported by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Fisheries Queensland (part of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) and by private donations.

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