



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

March 2010

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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Columbia Sportswear Company Teams Up With The Ocean Foundation to Help Save Marine Habitat. (USA)

10 March 2010 StreetInsider.com

Columbia Sportswear Company (NASDAQ: COLM) and The Ocean Foundation announced today they are joining forces to protect and restore seagrass meadows.

"Columbia is the first company in the outdoor industry to recognize the critical importance of seagrass to marine ecosystems, our economy and quality of life," said Mark J. Spalding, President of The Ocean Foundation. "Together, we will educate thousands of online visitors about the importance of seagrass beds in protecting our oceans and our planet, as well as how to safely travel through them."

Columbia Sportswear Company and The Ocean Foundation are launching this effort online (www.columbia.com/seagrass) on March 9, in conjunction with Seagrass Awareness Month in the state of Florida. In addition, Columbia has provided an initial donation of \$10,000 to enhance the SeaGrass Grow campaign.

Full story and source:

<http://www.streetinsider.com/Press+Releases/Columbia+Sportswear+Company+Teams+Up+With+The+Ocean+Foundation+to+Help+Save+Marine+Habitat...+One+Seagrass+Meadow+at+a+Time/5426251.html>

Dredging stirs harbour toxins (Australia)

11 March 2010 The West Australian

Toxin tests on live mussels put in bags in the Swan River and Fremantle Harbour for the first six weeks of port dredging have shown detectable levels of tributyltin, polychlorinated biphenyls and heavy metals. The results, released in Fremantle Ports' latest water quality monitoring report, show that poisons disturbed by dredging in Fremantle harbour are being absorbed by filter feeders.

In a separate move, Fremantle Ports has agreed to survey the health of seagrass meadows and coral banks north of the harbour after its monitoring triggered concerns that dredging activities may be choking ecologically important areas off Fremantle. The survey, to be conducted this month, will check the extent of damage to seagrass and coral communities after light loggers recorded repeatedly low levels of light penetrating the ocean floor.

Full story and source: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-breaking/6919142/dredging-stirs-harbour-toxins/>

Bu Tinah is given Dh28m push (ABU DHABI)

06 March 2010, National

The capital plans to spend Dh28 million (US\$7.6m) promoting the islands of Bu Tinah, one of 28 finalists in a competition to find world wonders of nature. The tiny archipelago, 130km west of Abu Dhabi, is in the final of the New7Wonders of Nature contest, having won through from an initial 447 entries.

The Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) has also commissioned a short documentary about Bu Tinah, which is being shown on the official campaign site www.butinah.ae. Launched under the patronage of Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, the Ruler's Representative in the Western Region and chairman of EAD, the campaign is focusing on Bu Tinah's conservation value.

Bu Tinah is a cluster of low-lying islands, surrounded by coral reefs and seagrass beds. There are sandy beaches, and the main island has a sheltered lagoon opening to the south, lined with mature mangroves. These habitats provide important feeding and breeding grounds for rare animals such as dugongs, sea turtles, dolphins, flamingos, Socotra cormorants and ospreys. With its shallow, calm waters and extensive seagrass beds, Bu Tinah is one of the UAE's most important locations for dugongs. About 600 of the country's estimated 3,000 dugongs live in the waters surrounding Bu Tinah. The UAE is second only to Australia as the most important habitat in the world for this large but friendly animal.

The film, commissioned by EAD, features aerial views and shows herds of dugongs swimming. There is also underwater footage showing them "vacuuming" seagrass from the sea floor. A mature dugong needs to eat five per cent of its body weight in seagrass every day.

Full story and source: <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100307/NATIONAL/703069896/1041/MAGAZINE3>

Govt approves Qld prawn farm near Reef (Australia)

05 March 2010, Sydney Morning Herald

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett has approved Australia's largest prawn farm, despite concerns about the impact of the \$40 million facility on the Great Barrier Reef. Pacific Reef Fisheries plans to build 259 land-based aquaculture ponds, each covering one hectare, adjacent to the Elliot River at Guthalungra, north of Bowen, Queensland. The facility would grow 2,500 tonnes of black tiger prawns by 2012 and inject \$13 million a year into Queensland's economy.

Mr Garrett on Friday announced the plan was approved with 19 strict conditions to protect the World Heritage area. The conditions would set an example of best practice environmentally sustainable development, Mr Garrett said. "Under the conditional approval granted today, Pacific Reef Fisheries will be required to monitor seagrass, coral and water quality in Abbot Bay, and provide regular results to my department," he said in a statement. "Should the levels of nutrients and sediment entering the bay from the facility increase to above those I approved, operations must be reduced or stop immediately, the incident must be reported to my department, and a review of processes must be done."

Before the facility is built, the design and operation arrangements must be independently assessed and certified. The farm would be constructed in stages, so its impact on the reef could be monitored, Mr Garrett said. "The reef must be protected not only as a priceless natural resource, but as a fundamental part of the Queensland economy," he said. "This project demonstrates that positive environmental results can be achieved while also supporting employment and local economies."

Full story and source: <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/govt-approves-qld-prawn-farm-near-reef-20100305-poi9.html>

Japan PM says to make US base proposal this month (Malaysia)

04 March 2010 Malaysia Star

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, scrambling to settle a row with Washington that is eroding his ratings, said on Thursday he would finalise this month a plan to move the U.S. airbase at the core of the feud. Hatoyama, whose Democratic Party swept to power last year promising to rethink ties with the United States, has pledged to reach agreement on a new relocation plan for the U.S. Marines' Futenma airbase by the end of May.

During the campaign that swept his party to power last year, Hatoyama had raised the hopes of many on Japan's Okinawa that Futenma could be moved off the southern island, host to the bulk of America's 47,000 military personnel. But Washington wants to stick to a 2006 deal to shift the facility to a less crowded spot on northern Okinawa, and voter perception that Hatoyama has mishandled ties with its ally has helped slice his ratings to under 40 percent in some surveys.

The Mainichi and Asahi newspapers said on Thursday that Japan was leaning toward a proposal to build a new runway inside the Marines' Camp Schwab on Okinawa and shift other training facilities either elsewhere in Japan or outside the country. The mayor of Nago, where Camp Schwab is located, has said he opposes the idea, but his approval is not legally required. The United States also rejected a similar plan during the decade of talks leading to the current agreement, which involves building runways on landfill in the adjacent bay, home to a rare marine mammal called the dugong, the Mainichi newspaper said.

Full story and source: http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/3/4/worldupdates/2010-03-04T162843Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_466534-1&sec=Worldupdates

Related article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/04/world/asia/04japan.html>

Dredging restores safe access to marina and canals at Port Geographe (Australia)

03 March 2010 Busselton Dunsborough Mail

The Department of Transport says dredging has restored safe access to the marina and canals at Port Geographe but it is now in a race against time to remove material from the beach that could again block the entrance channel during winter storms. The department's general manager of coastal infrastructure Steve Jenkins said tenders had been called to bypass approximately 120,000 cubic metres of seagrass wrack and sand from the beach (adjacent to the western groyne) east to Wonnerup and an adjacent offshore location.

Mr Jenkins said the department and the Shire of Busselton had agreed to a request from the local community to delay the annual seagrass bypassing work until April following concerns about the loss of beach access during the holiday season and summer months. The bypass operation will supply sand to the beach at Wonnerup, protecting the coastline in this area from winter erosion. Seagrass wrack deposited in this area would be able to disperse naturally.

Full story and source: <http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/dredging-restores-safe-access-to-marina-and-canals-at-port-geographe/1766450.aspx>

Indian bird park signs pact with German varsity to study sea grass

02 March 2010 Earthtimes (press release)

An internationally well-known bird sanctuary in eastern India has signed a pact with Leibniz University of Germany to study seagrass and expanding sea meadows of the lake, a news report said Tuesday. The Telegraph newspaper said the tie-up between the Chilika Development Authority located in the Orissa state and the Hannover-based German university is due to the fact that despite increased research activity on the subject, studies on the Indian variety were 'scanty and inadequate'.

"Seagrass is a vital indicator of coastal ecosystem and seagrass meadows serve as spawning and nursery ground for a large numbers of fish and invertebrate species and play an important role in the food web of inshore ecosystem. Six genus and 14 species belonging to two families are known from Indian coast," Ajit Pattnaik, the chief executive of CDA has been quoted as saying by the newspaper.

The CDA has entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Leibniz University for the identification of seagrass of Chilika by using molecular taxonomy — known to be the most authentic method of identification of a species. While seagrass meadows are declining globally, the meadows in Chilika have been expanding showing a very good sign of recovery of its ecosystem. The Chilika Lake is a brackish water lagoon, located at the mouth of River Daya, which flows ultimately into the Bay of Bengal. It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest lagoon in the World. It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent. The lake is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals. The lake is an ecosystem with large fishery resources. It was in the 1980s designated as the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Full story and source: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/312054,indian-bird-park-signs-past-with-german-varsity-to-study.html>

Related article: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100302/jsp/nation/story_12163907.jsp , <http://www.bombaynews.net/story/607012> , <http://www.bombaynews.net/story/607012> , http://www.odishatoday.com/orissa_2/CDA_signs_MoU_WITH_Germany_Varsity_280210-90879265657875668798690867896890.html

Nine US Senators Endorse Marine Conservation Solutions to Climate (USA)

02 March 2010, Earthtimes (press release)

An international coalition today thanked the nine U.S. Senators who sponsored the Clean Energy Partnerships Act for advancing marine conservation as part of the solution to climate change. The Act is focused on mitigating climate change and making the transition to a clean energy economy, through offsetting greenhouse gas emissions. The legislation advances marine conservation by including the restoration and conservation of certain coastal and marine ecosystems, which capture and store atmospheric carbon, in the list of eligible mitigation projects. Other mitigation projects include sustainable agriculture and forestry practices.

Recent reports produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found that, when healthy, mangrove forests, saltwater marshlands and seagrass meadows are extremely effective at storing atmospheric carbon, thereby mitigating climate change. The reports are titled 'Blue Carbon' and 'The Management of Natural Coastal Carbon Sinks,' respectfully.

"Restoring seagrass, mangroves and salt-marshes is a win-win strategy, because they contribute to mitigate climate change through their carbon sink potential, that rivals with the Amazonian forest in intensity, but at the same time help recover fisheries and protect shorelines," said Prof Carlos M. Duarte, co-author of the UNEP report and Director of the International Laboratory for Global Change at the Spanish Council for Scientific Research.

Full story and source: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/nine-us-senators-endorse-marine-conservation-solutions-to-climate-change,1185325.shtml>

Women farm seaweed, draw in a catch (India)

02 March 2010, Deccan Herald

By enhancing family incomes through non-fishing activities, women have contributed greatly in reducing the exploitation of the Gulf of Mannar bio-reserve. Local communities, well represented by women, are engaged in evolving a roadmap to conserve this rare ecosystem that has become an ecological hotspot. At places its waters have become so turbid, thanks to oil from vessels and effluents from nearby industries, that the exotic marine life of the region is endangered. Over-fishing, illegal coral mining, and the over-harvesting of sea grass are among the major threats.

A corpus for managing the Gulf was then set up with the Global Environment Fund. The objective was to manage the GoM reserve in such a way as to allow sustainable livelihood without the overexploitation of its resources. In 2009, the trust got a woman chairperson — Indian Forest Service officer and plant expert, Dr Aruna Basu Sarcar. The local people say that she can be frequently spotted at fish landing sites, inspecting the catch, talking to school kids, or visiting computer training programmes. Under her stewardship, as many as 2,150 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been set up with alternative employment generation capacities.

They generate additional income by making bricks and charcoal. At the same time, even activities involving the use of local resources are now being done in a sustainable, ecologically sensitive way. For instance, women who used to harvest naturally growing seagrass and seaweed, popular as additive in the food industry now farm seaweed. In this process, instead of destroying the naturally growing seagrass and seaweed which provides feeding and breeding ground for many small marine creatures, bamboo frames with seed-plants are placed into the sea. After a few weeks, these frames are lifted, and these now have a new crop of sea grass and seaweed, which is harvested. The process is sustainable and saves the natural underwater meadows.

Full story and source: <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/55011/women-farm-seaweed-draw-catch.html>

Sad end for dugong (Australia)

26 February 2010, Mackay Daily Mercury

A badly decomposed dugong washed up on Far Beach on Wednesday afternoon but was not reported to authorities until yesterday. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service marine ranger Steve Fisher said it was not unheard of for dugongs wash up on beaches but it was still relatively uncommon.

Department of Environment and Resource Management removed the animal in conjunction with Mackay Council yesterday afternoon. A Mackay Regional Council spokesman said the dugong was buried above the high tide mark.

To report sick, dead or injured marine life, call the Environmental Protection Agency's Wildlife Stranding Hotline on 1300 130 372.

Full story and source: <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/story/2010/02/26/sad-end-for-dugong/>

UNEP emphasize important role of sea in climate change controller

25 February 2010, Xinhua

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) on Thursday emphasized the important role of sea and coastal area as the climate change controller in order to save the Earth's future from global warming. The comment was issued in a joint statement by UNEP and Indonesia that marked the launch of Blue Carbon Concept on the sidelines of the 11th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in Nusa Dua of Bali province in Indonesia.

The concept proves the role of marine and coastal ecosystem that are dominated by marine vegetation such as mangrove forests, seagrass, brackish marshes and salt marshes in carbon deposited. Coastal and marine ecosystem is believed to be able to guard the balance with the forest to take up carbon emissions through sequestration.

Indonesia's Minister for Marine and Fisheries Affairs Fadel Muhammad and the UNEP's Executive Director Achim Steiner said in the joint statement that the basis of the joint statement is the mandate of the Manado Ocean Declaration that was announced in Indonesia May last year and a part of efforts in controlling the impact of climate change.

Full story and source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/sci/2010-02/25/c_13187510.htm

Broadwater hovercraft in hot water (Australia)

25 February 2010, Gold Coast Bulletin News

Anglers say the Broadwater's new hovercraft attraction is a hazard to wildlife and, potentially, sunbathers. GC Hovercraft Tours and Watersports began offering 30-minute 'extreme hovercraft thrill rides' last month. But David Bateman, deputy chairman of the state's peak angling body, Sunfish Queensland, said a previous hovercraft was banned from the Broadwater several years ago after nearly running over sunbathers.

Mr Bateman said hovercraft applied pressure to yabby holes which blew them out. He said the craft ran over sandbanks covered in soldier crabs, potentially killing them. As a commercial craft he said the hovercraft should be required to stick to navigation channels.

GC Hovercraft pilot Tony Bailey said he was 'very much eco-minded' and stayed well away from sandbanks when the soldier crabs were out, even avoiding exposed seagrass to protect fish eggs. He said the hovercraft cushion was low pressure and did not affect yabbies. Mr Bailey said he slowed to six knots when near people on land and was careful to pass downwind to avoid noise or blasting them with sand

Full story and source: http://www.goldcoast.com.au/article/2010/02/25/192441_gold-coast-news.html

EM Balls and Seagrass Preservation in Phuket (Thailand)

Phuket News by phuketindex.com

LTG Pichet Wisaijohn, the Commander in Chief of the 4th Army Area, biologists and environmentalists, threw 10,000 Effective Microorganisms or EM balls into Pa Klok Bay. These EM balls help to recover the sea grass which is a main food of dugongs.

In addition, the biologists collected the sea grass samples for scientific analyzing, since the nearby villagers had told them that previous EM balls helped to increased sea grass in the area. The EM balls were made from chicken stool and liquid EM. The microbes in EM balls are useful

Full story and source: <http://phuketnews.phuketindex.com/environment/em-balls-and-seagrass-preservation-in-phuket-174687.html>

Volunteers find more murky water near airport site (USA)

22 February 2010, The News Herald

Patrice Couch guided her small skiff north up Crooked Creek on Monday with a sure hand, looking for submerged logs. Couch, director of the St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association's Bay Watch Program, was on her way to take some readings — checking the turbidity levels of the creek — at RMA monitoring stations where Kelly Branch meets Crooked Creek, about two miles north of State 388.

Roughly two inches of rain blew through the county Monday morning and Couch worries about the silt levels in both Crooked Creek, located west of the construction site of the new Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, and Burnt Mill Creek on the east. The silt levels of the two creeks have spiked in recent months because of stormwater runoff from the new airport's construction, especially during what Couch calls "pulse turbidity events," when dirt-laden stormwater breaches the airport's controls.

Couch worries about the ability of the creeks to support fish and the long-term viability of the seagrass beds in the bay.

Full story and source: <http://www.newsherald.com/news/panama-81672-airport-site.html>

Related article: <http://www.newsherald.com/news/sound-81569-bay-warning.html>

Marine Environment Can Affect East Asian Economy (Malaysia)

19 February 2010, Bernama

The economic future of East Asia and the region's ability to overcome poverty are facing serious challenges unless urgent action is taken to manage the health and wealth of its marine environment, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said in its latest report.

The East Asian Seas State of the Marine Environment report stated that the region's seas faced multiple threats as a result of factors including insensitive development, pollution, alien invasive species and climate change. Economically, important coastal habitats and ecosystems are under pressure with 40 per cent of coral reefs and half of all mangroves having already been lost, UNEP said in the report released Friday. Dr Chou Loke Ming from the National University of Singapore said these ocean ecosystems were a critical lifeline for the region's economies and people.

UNEP the East Asian Seas are home to nearly 80 percent of global coral species, over 60 percent of mangrove species, and over 55 percent of seagrass species. Furthermore, they accounts for 50 percent of global fisheries production and 80 percent of global aquaculture production. Annually, coral reefs are estimated to generate US\$112.5 billion, mangroves US\$5.1 billion, wetlands US\$1.2 billion and seagrass US\$86 million.

According to the report, the most exposed areas are deltas and mega-deltas of China, Vietnam and Thailand, which also stated that sea level rise was estimated to affect as much as 55 percent of the population in Vietnam, 26 percent in Thailand, 18 percent in the Philippines, and 11 percent in China.

Full story and source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=476559>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine Issue 39

The latest issue of Seagrass-Watch news (the official magazine of the global seagrass and assessment program) is now available online at <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2010

Australia

Broome, WA, September 10-12 2010

For more information: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop10>

CONFERENCES

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, 21–25November, 2010)

Open to all and will include invited plenary lectures and oral and poster presentations.

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

Please visit the conference & workshop web site for further details: <http://www.sc.psu.ac.th/seagrass/>

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/>. Online registration will open soon.

Important Dates for the WSC and ISBW9

15 February 2010	Call for Abstracts/Interests
15 March 2010	Registration Opens
31 March 2010	deadline for student support fellowship applications
15 May 2010	Early registration closes
31 May 2010	student support fellowships notified
15 June 2010	The last day of abstract submission
31 July 2010	Notification of Abstract Acceptance for Oral or Poster Presentations, Updated Programme
15 August 2010	Registration closes
15 September 2010	Final Programme Announcement

Publications:

SOS Files: A Journey to Sungai Pulai

The 156-page species handbook features the flora and fauna (mainly marine) in Sungai Pulai and is the first comprehensive publication from Save Our Seahorses (SOS). This handbook was partially funded by the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). The authors are Choo Chee Kuang, Serina Rahman and Khor Hui Min. The design was done by Ms Chin Pik Wun. One thousand copies were printed and are currently available at the SOS research centre and the Malaysian Nature Society bookstore. Priced at RM29 each.

For more information contact: saveourseahorses@yahoo.com

SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

Seagrass: Pastures of the sea <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vgswj20> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>

Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important. Over 1500 views so far!!!

GALLERY

Fiji: 27 Feb – 05 March 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Townsville (Qld): 29 - 31 January 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Jan_10.html

Mer Island (Qld, Australia): 28 February 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Feb_10.html

Green Island (Cairns, Qld): 13 February 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Feb_10.html

Mabuiag Island (Qld, Australia): 08 February 2010 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_Feb_10.html

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 39 <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 E-Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.