



31 January 2014

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NEWS

Abbot Point approval: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority imposes conditions on dredge spoil dumping (Australia)

31 January 2014, ABC online

The approval of a plan to dump millions of cubic metres of dredge spoil from the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion into the Great Barrier Reef includes nearly 50 conditions imposed by the reef authority. The Great Barrier Reef

Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has approved plans to tip about 3 million cubic meters of spoil into the Marine Park as part of the project at Bowen, in North Queensland, green-lighted by Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt last month. But the organisation says there will be safeguards in place to ensure the reef will not be adversely affected.

The conditions include limits on when the spoil can be dumped, a long-term water quality monitoring plan and compensation for commercial fishers in the event of adverse impacts. Authority spokesman Bruce Elliot says the dump site does not contain coral or seagrass. GBRMPA chairman Russell Reichelt says there are a lot of misconceptions surrounding the reef, its health and future, but overall it retains strong resilience.

But Greens Senator Larissa Waters says she does not believe sufficient protections are in place. "I don't share the Marine Park Authority's confidence that those conditions will be complied with," she said. "Sadly we've seen staff cuts at the Environment Department and the Marine Park Authority themselves already with more expected to come. "Who's going to be watching to ensure those conditions are complied with?"

Scientists and conservation lobbyists had urged the authority to reject the expansion, with 233 signing a letter to Mr Reichelt. "The best available science makes it very clear that expansion of the port at Abbot Point will have detrimental effects on the Great Barrier Reef," the letter said. Mr Reichelt says the organisation was not pressured to approve the proposal and says the decision was based on relevant scientific data.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

<http://rt.com/news/barrier-reef-coal-mud-448/>

<http://econews.com.au/news-to-sustain-our-world/anger-as-barrier-reef-dredge-dumping-to-go-ahead/>

<http://www.forexlive.com/blog/2014/01/31/australia-coal-dredging-disposal-great-barrier-reef-31-january-2014/>

<http://econews.com.au/news-to-sustain-our-world/barrier-reef-authority-close-to-dumping-decision/>

<http://www.smh.com.au/queensland/dday-looms-for-massive-abbot-point-plan-20140129-31mo2.html>

<http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2014/01/27/environmentalists-urge-gbrmpa-to-refuse-dumping-permit-australia/>

<http://www.dredgingtoday.com/2014/01/27/environmentalists-urge-gbrmpa-to-refuse-dumping-permit-australia/#.UuuZf7Tcd-I>

World Wetlands Day on February 2, 2014

By The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The international theme for World Wetlands Day 2014 is Wetlands and Agriculture: Partners for Growth.

For millennia, wetlands have been used directly for agriculture, and for supplying food, fuel and fibre to support lives and livelihoods. Wetlands continue to play an essential role in supporting modern day agriculture. They provide water storage, flood buffering, nutrient removal, water purification and erosion control. Wetlands have often been seen as a barrier to agriculture, and they continue to be drained and reclaimed to make farming land available. But the essential role of wetlands in support of agriculture is becoming clearer and clearer, and sustainable practices which support both agriculture and healthy wetlands are therefore coming to the fore. Wetlands and Agriculture: Partners for Growth, places a focus on the need for the wetland and agricultural sectors (and the water sector too of course) to work together for the best shared outcomes.

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Cocoa Beach bans fertilizing from June 1 to Sept. 30 (FL, USA)

17 January 2014, Florida Today

Cocoa Beach has banned fertilizing during summer rainy season. After a final public hearing last night, the City Commission adopted an ordinance that includes a "blackout" period for fertilizer application during the four-month rainy season: June 1 to Sept. 30. Titusville adopted a similar ordinance Thursday. Cape Canaveral will consider a rainy season fertilizer ban on Jan. 21.

Rainy season bans on fertilizer application are the most controversial aspect of state-required local ordinances to improve water quality of the Indian River Lagoon and other waters. Florida forces local governments to adopt ordinances at least as strict as a set of state-suggested fertilizer rules if they are located near waters the state determines to be taking in too much nitrogen and phosphorus.

The two chemical elements are essential nutrients for living organisms and key ingredients in fertilizers. But in excess, nutrients from fertilizer and other lawn chemicals can cause too much algae to grow in waterways like the lagoon, blocking the sunlight seagrass needs to photosynthesize. Seagrass beds are considered among the most important habitats in the lagoon, providing food and nursery areas for marine life. Seagrass also helps fuel a \$3.7 billion yearly economic value and 15,000 full-time and part-time jobs in the Indian River Lagoon region.

This past March, as hundreds of manatees and pelicans happened to be dying in the lagoon, Rockledge — Brevard's oldest city — became the county's first city to ban use of fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus from June 1 to Sept. 30. Beyond the lagoon, Rockledge was concerned about the St. Johns River, where half the city's stormwater flows. Just over a year ago, Brevard County commissioners adopted an ordinance similar to the state-suggested

rules, balking at a rainy season ban and other stricter rules. But increasing public awareness of the lagoon's ecological distress prompted them to revisit the issue.

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

<http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20140105/NEWS01/301050048/Brevard-cities-weigh-rainy-season-fertilizer-bans>

Seagrass replanted off Kangaroo Island in a bid to reverse 30-year decline (SA, Australia)

17 January 2014, ABC Online

Efforts are being made to restore seagrass off an idyllic and isolated part of the Kangaroo Island coast. Data shows 1600 hectares of underwater meadows have died as a result of nutrient run-off at Western River Cove over the past 30 years. The cove is in the middle of the island's north coast and is sheltered by two headlands.

Alicia McArdle from the local natural resources management board says bunches of seagrass and seeds are being planted in the area. She says the plant plays a crucial ecological role, despite its sometimes unsavoury reputation.

Ms McArdle says seagrass seedlings have shown promising growth and will be replanted in the ocean. "We're also doing some trials with seagrass seeds so we've gone out and collected some seeds in early December and planted them in some hessian bags," she said. "Last year's work has actually seen some good growth. "We've started doing a second trial this year to see how that's going and expanding that trial to three different areas rather than one trial site."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-17/seagrass-transplanted-off-kangaroo-island/5205620?section=sa>

related articles:

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/20823291/seagrass-replanted-off-kangaroo-island-in-a-bid-to-reverse-30-year-decline/>

<http://www.theislanderonline.com.au/story/2026998/residents-called-to-plant-seagrass/?cs=12>

Dugong rescued in Quezon town (Philippines)

11 January 2014, Inquirer.net

A dugong stranded in shallow waters off Infanta in Quezon has been rescued by wildlife authorities and will be released when the seas have calmed, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said Saturday. A team from the environment department's Biodiversity Management Bureau, formerly known as Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, said the "neonate" or young male dugong (sea cow) was discovered Thursday by fishermen in Barangay Binulanan.

In a news release, BMB Director Ma. Theresa Mundita Lim said the young dugong was found stranded during low tide by fishermen Michael and Manuelito Nolladong, who immediately sought help from the local DENR office. The dugong, which measures 1.06 meters long, has been transferred to the nearby barangay of Dinahican, also in Infanta, "to shield it from strong waves but will be released soon when the sea gets calm," the official said.

"We have a technical team right now in the area led by a veterinary doctor, Dr. Rizza Salinas, to release the dugong as soon as the sea gets calm," Lim said. Other BMB personnel on hand to help in the release of the dugong back to the sea are Nilo Ramoso, Renato Borja and Bibiano Mejino.

Efforts to save an orphaned baby dugong rescued by fishermen were lost on 19 January 2014, when the plant-eating marine mammal nicknamed Binu, died at the ocean park where veterinarians worked around the clock to treat him.

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related articles:

<http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2014/01/17/philippines-trying-to-save-rescued-baby-dugong/>

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/344157/scitech/science/rescued-baby-dugong-in-critical-condition-video>

<http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/en/news/regions/26016-rescued-baby-dugong-survives-first-week-gains-weight>

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/567537/gastro-did-baby-dugong-binu-in>

<http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2014/01/20/rescued-baby-dugong-dies-in-the-philippines/>

The disappearing 'mermaid' (India)

09 January 2013 Business Standard

Dugong, India's only breed of sea cow, is fighting for survival. The Indian subcontinent is home to the dugong, which gets its name from the Tagalog/Malay word 'duyung' which means 'lady of the sea'. "Historically, we had dugong populations in the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat, Malwan in Maharashtra, Netrani in Karnataka, Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu as well as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," says B C Choudhary, scientific advisor to the Wildlife Trust of India.

But that is no longer the case. "The range of the dugong in Indian waters has shrunk to three locations: the Gulf of Kutch, the Gulf of Mannar and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," says K Sivakumar, research scientist and dugong expert at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun. "With a population of 100, the Gulf of Mannar has the highest

number. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands follow with 50-60 individuals, while the Gulf of Kutch, where a live dugong has not been seen in the last 7-8 years, might have as little as 10 individuals," he adds.

"The Convention on Migratory Species (an intergovernmental treaty) had come out with a memorandum of understanding to conserve the dugong. All dugong-range countries, including India, had to sign the MoU. WII in India promised to conduct a survey of the species and understand its distribution through interviews with fishermen," says Sivakumar. Choudhary, who contributed to the study, lists out the threats. "Dugongs," he says, "are hunted for the meat, especially in Tamil Nadu, where its meat is consumed by the fishermen communities. Propeller-driven vehicles are also a big threat. Pollutants released by coastal industries can also damage sea grass beds and the dugong's reproductive system." Gillnets used by fishermen are the worst killers, adds Sivakumar.

Of the three populations in Indian waters, Sivakumar feels those found in the Gulf of Mannar have the best chance of surviving and breeding. "That is because this area has the best seagrass meadows. In the Andaman and Nicobar area, the seagrass is very patchy and cannot support a big population. If even some individuals there are killed, the entire population could be wiped out. And in the Gulf of Kutch, there is a huge problem of industrial pollution," he explains. The experts feel that getting the fishermen on the side of the dugongs is the only way to protect the mammal.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Rethink needed on turtle conservation (Australia)

9 January 2014, UQ News

Green turtle populations have expanded so much in Indonesia's east coast islands marine protected areas that they are adopting new feeding habits, degrading the ecosystem and threatening their own conservation. Scientists and conservationists had believed that marine protected areas would be key to enhancing the recovery of protected species and ecosystems. But a new international study by The University of Queensland and Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands has shown this conservation method may have the opposite effect.

Lead scientist Dr Marjolijn Christianen from Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands and her collaborators, including Professor Peter Mumby from The University of Queensland, have shown that destructive grazing of high numbers of green turtles concentrated in a small number of marine protected areas leads to on-going degradation and imminent collapse of seagrass habitat. The study found that when the turtle numbers increased to about 20 turtles per hectare their foraging habits changed from eating only seagrass tips to digging up and consuming the roots and rhizomes, creating abundant bare gaps and increasing erosion and reducing seagrass regrowth.

UQ's Professor Mumby said recent protection efforts had been successful in many areas worldwide, but green turtles still remained highly threatened. "The protection of major nesting beaches, tightened hunting restrictions, and additional conservation measures have led to population increase, including inside marine protected areas," Professor Mumby said. "At the same time, however, their feeding grounds – sea grass meadows – have been declining worldwide at a fast rate as a result of poor management of coastal pollution. "As a result, seagrass beds – the turtle's favoured habitat – have declined." He said it was alarming to see turtles using such desperate strategies to find food and that the real conservation problem was not the marine protected areas but the lack of good seagrass habitat in unprotected areas. "We really need to do more to protect coastal areas and the quality of their habitats, and this means controlling development and agricultural chemicals, and preventing mud entering rivers," he said.

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<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/01/16/endangered-turtles-face-new-threat-indonesia.html>

<http://science.time.com/2014/01/16/endangered-turtles-face-new-threat-in-indonesia/>

<http://www.oneidadispatch.com/general-news/20140116/the-island-that-has-too-many-of-these-endangered-turtles>

<http://www.perthnow.com.au/technology/science/rare-green-sea-turtles-have-overpopulated-the-indonesias-derawan-island/story-fnjwk7lb-1226803656294>

<http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/Spike+number+endangered+green+turtles+Indonesia+island+threatens+food+source/9395900/story.html>

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/01/16/spike-in-endangered-green-turtles-off-indonesia-island-risks-destruction-food/>

<http://www.therecord.com/news-story/4320509-endangered-green-turtles-could-destroy-their-vital-food-source/>

Dredger confident of dump approval at Abbot Point (QLD, Australia)

06 January 2014, by Pamela Frost, Mackay Daily Mercury

The authority behind the dredging of Abbot Point coal terminal believes it has a strong chance of gaining approval to dump the dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It also says dumping the dredge spoil on land would not be the best environmental outcome.

North Queensland Bulk Ports (NQBPA) has been given the green light to dredge three million cubic metres of sand as part of the coal terminal expansion. However, a decision on what to do with the dredge spoil is currently in the hands of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), which has extended its decision deadline to January 31.

A NQBP spokesman said they didn't have a "plan B" if their permit to dump the dredge spoil offshore was rejected. When asked about the possibility of dumping the spoil on land, which other groups have suggested, the NQBP spokesman said it had been considered and rejected because studies showed it did not provide the best environmental outcome.

GBRMPA initially had a Christmas Eve deadline to decide whether it would approve or reject the proposed dumping location, or defer the decision, which it elected to do. In a statement it said a senior delegate, at general management level, was assessing the matter. A GBRMPA spokeswoman said they would consider the impact of dredging on the environment and social, cultural and heritage values of the marine park. They would also consider written comments received about the application and how dredging would impact upon public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the marine park, the spokeswoman said.

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

Turtles are thriving (QLD, Australia)

04 January 2014, Fraser Coast Chronicle

The region's turtle and dugong population is thriving despite the devastating floods almost a year ago. After the 2011 floods there were concerns the silt and debris in the water would blanket the seagrass and starve both species. Dugongs and turtles rely on the seagrass beds as their main source of food. After ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald battered the Fraser Coast a year ago the local sea life faced another stretch of scarce food in the region. Murky water and low salinity that followed the 2011 floods was expected to once again impact seagrass supply.

However local fisherman Geoff Melksham has been fishing in the region for more than 30 years and he says there are more turtles than ever before. "There are more turtles out there now than I have ever seen in my life," he said. "You can see them on the flats out there. "When we were kids you'd see one or two but now there are heaps."

A Department of Environment and Heritage Protection spokesman said green turtle populations in the Southern Great Barrier Reef waters (which incorporate the Fraser Coast) were strong. "While the floods in recent years have impacted some inshore seagrass meadows there has been no impact on the more extensive algal pastures throughout most of the Great Barrier Reef," he said. "This is supported by the many thousands of green turtles that are currently nesting nightly on the coral cays of the southern Great Barrier Reef with nesting numbers greater than we recorded in 2011 and 2012 seasons. "In addition, marine wild-life stranding data show a downward trend in turtle and dugong strandings since 2011."

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

Dredge Disposal Kills Seagrass (TX, USA)

01 January 2014, KGBT-TV

The muck rises up out of the placid waters of the Lower Laguna Madre like an underwater volcano. Only, this is a man made eruption from a recent dredging operation in the Intracoastal Waterway east of Laguna Vista.

Periodic dredging of the Intracoastal Waterway that runs the length of the Laguna Madre from Corpus Christi to the Port of Brownsville is required to maintain the channel to a depth of 12 feet to accommodate barge traffic. However, when the muck dredged from the channel is piped into the open bay it covers and kills seagrasses which angers many fishermen like Captain Janie Petty.

Captain Janie Petty, "I think it is in everybody's best interest to put a stop to this. Not only is it silting up the entire bay, but it is bound to be silting the intracoastal right back up again also because as you can see they are just dumping it out into the open bay." Tony Reisinger, Cameron County Marine Extension Agent, "Historically open bay disposal has been controversial for decades...when it is placed in the open bay of course it can cover seagrasses and seagrasses can die and that can take away habitat." There are a handful of upland sites where the dredge disposal is placed when convenient, but throughout many stretches of the intracoastal land is not close enough to easily pipe the sludge into containment areas so it is unfortunately dumped right back into adjacent bay waters.

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

2013 is Australia's hottest year on record (Australia)

03 January 2014, Bureau of Meteorology

2013 was Australia's warmest year since records began in 1910. Mean temperatures across Australia have generally been well above average since September 2012. Long periods of warmer-than-average days have been common, with a distinct lack of cold weather. Nights have also been warmer than average, but less so than days.

The Australian area-averaged mean temperature for 2013 was +1.20 °C above the 1961–1990 average. Maximum temperatures were +1.45 °C above average, and minimum temperatures +0.94 °C above average. All states and territories recorded above average temperatures in 2013, with Western Australia, Northern Territory and South

Australia all breaking annual average temperature records. It was the second-hottest year on record for New South Wales and Queensland, third for Victoria and fourth for Tasmania. The highest temperature for the year was 49.6°C recorded in Moomba, South Australia, on January 12, the highest for the state since 1960 and the sixth highest ever officially recorded in Australia. The same January heatwave set record hottest days in Hobart (41.8°C) and Sydney (45.8°C).

Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) around Australia were unusually warm throughout the year, with the monthly anomalies for January and February the highest on record and that for November the second-highest on record. This extends a period of sustained record-high SSTs in the Australian region since 2010. Preliminary data, for the year to November, place SSTs for 2013 as the third-highest since 1910, 0.51 °C above the long-term average.

Based on preliminary data (January–November), the estimated global mean temperature for 2013 is 0.49 °C above the long-term (1961–1990) average of 14.0 °C. Using this method, 2013 ranks as the sixth-warmest year since global records commenced in 1880.

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

A chance to learn more about seagrass project (United Kingdom)

30 January 2014, [cambrian-news.co.uk](http://www.cambrian-news.co.uk)

An open day to share information about the Porthdinllaen Seagrass Project will be held on Tuesday, 4 February, at Nefyn Golf Club. This is a chance to learn about the partnership project, set up in 2012, between the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation, the National Trust and other stake holders, which aims to investigate ways of protecting the important sea-grass bed at Porthdinllaen, without impacting the use of the area. The seagrass bed at Porthdinllaen is one of the largest in north Wales, and forms part of the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation.

<http://www.cambrian-news.co.uk/news/i/37617/>

Citizens File Petition/Intent To Sue-Stop State Seagrass Eradication (WA, USA)

30 January 2014, [SanJuanIslander.com](http://www.sanjuanislander.com)

The Coalition To Protect Puget Sound Habitat has filed an administrative Rule-Making to Amend Petition with the Governors Office requesting that Jay Inslee take the necessary action to direct the State Weed Board to initiate rule-making to delete *Zostera japonica* (Japanese Eelgrass) as a Class C Noxious Weed. Despite objections from numerous scientists, citizens, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources, the Weed Board's Class C Noxious Weed listing includes all Washington waters including Puget Sound. *Zostera japonica* was listed as a noxious weed at the request of large corporate shellfish growers demanding that they be allowed to eradicate *Zostera japonica* in Washington waters without limits.

The petitioners say, the State Weed Control Board ignored the significant ecological benefits that outweigh industry's unsupported claims that *Z. japonica* reduces their revenues and expansion. The shellfish industry is now requesting that Ecology issue NPDES permits to spray the pesticide Imazamox in Washington waters as early as this April with the public comment period ending February 15. Sierra Club has encouraged citizens to voice their opposition to this proposed spraying as well as the shellfish industry proposed spraying of Imidicloprid, a known bee killer .

As outlined in this appeal, the Coalition has stated that the Weed Board should not be allowed to violate existing county, state and federal laws that afford protection for both non-native and native eelgrass. The proposed eradication documents clearly show that adjacent native eelgrass will also be damaged or eliminated. Food sources for hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl, cover for salmon smolts, vegetation that supports invertebrates and herring spawn medium will also be collateral damage. The petitioners say, one State Agency nor Ecology should be allowed to ignore environmental and human health concerns at the demand of one industry.

For appeal and supporting study documentation, please visit: <http://coalitiontoprotectpugetsoundhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/eelgrass-petition.pdf>

<http://www.sanjuanislander.com/island-newshome/environment/8455-eelgrass>

Stormwater runoff is killing sea grasses (VA, USA)

30 January 2014, *The Virginian-Pilot*

Seagrasses, a key indicator of the Chesapeake Bay's health, have declined to their lowest level since the mid-1980s. The likely culprit: stormwater runoff. Grasses are dying off because dirty water is blocking sunlight the plants need to thrive, said Bob Orth, a professor at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences.

Orth gave his annual seagrasses report to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission on Tuesday. He said stormwater, which washes dirt and other pollutants into waterways after rain, is probably the main reason for the decline. The report was based on data from 2012, the most recent. Rainfall from Hurricane Irene and the remnants of

Tropical Storm Lee in 2011 generated runoff that probably killed off some of the grasses, he said. Seagrasses in the Chesapeake Bay decreased to 48,000 acres in 2012, down from a high of 90,000 acres in 2002.

Virginia is poised to enact tighter stormwater regulation starting July 1. Some localities are calling for a delay in the new rules. Bills to do that are working their way through the General Assembly. Environmental groups are fighting proposed delays.

Not all sea grasses are having trouble. Grasses near the mouth of the James River and in seaside bays of the Eastern Shore are thriving. These grasses benefit from colder ocean water and are cleansed of sediment by the ebb and flood of tides, Orth said. He said that while grasses are sensitive to poor water quality, they are quick to rebound when it improves.

<http://hamptronroads.com/2014/01/report-stormwater-runoff-killing-sea-grasses>

Restrictions around Isle of Wight coast start this week (United Kingdom)

30 January 2014, *On The Wight*

Two new byelaws have come into effect this week that place restrictions on activities to protect sensitive reef and seagrass around much of the coast of the Isle of Wight. It's overseen by the Southern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority, who are going through the process of updating their byelaws. The implementation of the Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) has brought the updating into clearer focus. The MCZ brought some concerns from Islanders, leading to the then-Minister responsible, Richard Benyon MP, coming to the Island nearly a year ago.

The now-implemented Byelaws can be summarised as:-

The 'Bottom Towed Fishing Gear' Byelaw – Manages trawling and dredging in certain areas around the Island (and other coasts)

The 'Prohibition of Gathering (Sea Fisheries Resources) in Seagrass Beds' byelaw – Applies to bait collectors and hand gatherers working in seagrass beds.

<http://onthewight.com/2014/01/29/isle-of-wight-coastal-fishing-restrictions/>

Law could fail to protect vulnerable marine life, UQ scientists warn (Australia)

24 January 2014, *UQ News*

A key piece of Australian environmental legislation may not adequately protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, a University of Queensland study has concluded. UQ TC Beirne School of Law's Dr Justine Bell said coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves might not be adequately protected under the Environmental Offsets Policy. The policy is a component of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, and was released in October 2012. It was recently used to guide the approval of the Abbot Point Coal Terminal, and incorporates principles developed for land-based ecosystems.

Dr Bell said different principles could be required for marine environments. "A one-size fits all environmental policy just doesn't work," she said. "Our marine ecosystems are different to other ecosystems, and continuing to treat them this way could gravely threaten the habitats the policy is designed to protect. "Offset programs permit the destruction of important habitats or populations under the condition that environmental rehabilitation be conducted elsewhere. "This allows development to occur in places where it may otherwise be prohibited by environmental laws," Dr Bell said.

UQ Global Change Institute researcher Dr Megan Saunders said marine life was more sensitive to environmental change and typically difficult to rehabilitate when depleted. "The policy needs to be amended to take these fundamental differences into account," she said. The study highlights seagrass meadows to demonstrate where the environmental policy is failing. The UQ study recommends a separate policy be formulated to protect seagrass meadows, which are threatened by port development projects such as the Abbot Point coal terminal.

<http://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2014/01/law-could-fail-protect-vulnerable-marine-life-uq-scientists-warn>

Environmental studies begin for Port of Hastings revamp (NSW, Australia)

23 January 2014, *ABC Online*

Environmental studies have started to make way for the Port of Hastings redevelopment. The project involves building a massive container port at the Port of Hastings and last year's budget included about \$110 million for the planning process. Scientists are studying seagrass, birds and water quality to collect information for the redevelopment. The Port of Hastings Development Authority says a detailed period of study will take place this year to understand the environmental conditions ahead of the expansion.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-23/environmental-studies-begin-ahead-of-port-of/5214428>

Number of dead sea turtles rising (India)

22 January 2014, *The Hindu*

There has been a significant rise in the number of sea turtles that were found dead along the sea coast in Nellore district recently. The conservationists blame it on the increased movement of mechanised boats.

The Tree Foundation, an organisation working in conservation and community development aspects, expressed concern over the increased findings of dead turtles on the beaches. The foundation has been working jointly with the wildlife wing of the Forest Department in AP in the community-based turtle conservation programmes for over five years. These activities are being carried out with the help of local people in Nellore and other selected coastal districts.

The volunteers of Tree Foundation have found about 24 dead turtles along the coast in TP Gudur mandal, 44 in Indukuripeta mandal and 48 in Kavali mandal limits. Sea turtles are breathing reptiles and they need to come to the surface of sea every 45 minutes to take air. Once these turtles are caught in fishing nets, they are pulled down into water which eventually leads to their death. Fishermen are requested to check their nets every now and then and release any turtle which is caught in their nets. Awareness is being increased on this aspect as fishermen's role in protection of turtles remains significant.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/number-of-dead-sea-turtles-rising/article5602697.ece>

Greg Hunt orders inquiry into reef dredging project (QLD, Australia)

20 January 2014, by Graham Lloyd, *The Australian*

An independent commission of inquiry with sweeping investigative powers will be held into Australia's biggest dredging project, which coincided with mass deaths of fish, turtles, dolphins and dugongs inside the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt said the terms of reference for the inquiry would be finalised this week but would be broad enough to properly investigate the Gladstone Harbour dredging project, the failure of a wall designed to retain dredge spoils and the management of the port on the central Queensland coast.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/greg-hunt-orders-inquiry-into-reef-dredging-project/story-fn59niix-1226805461402#>

Baby turtles about to emerge from nests on Coast beaches (QLD, Australia)

04 January 2014, *Noosa News*

The pitter patter of tiny flippers soon will be heard along Sunshine Coast beaches, with the first turtle hatchlings expected to emerge from nests in early February. Sunshine Coast TurtleCare coordinator Kate Winter said there were about 30 nests scattered along the dunes between Sunshine Beach and Shelly Beach.

About 10 turtles were responsible for the nests, Ms Winter said, with most of them loggerhead turtles and a few green turtles. Ms Winter said it was important to not interfere with hatchlings or nests. If you see turtle tracks, nesting turtles or turtle hatchlings from Golden Beach to Point Cartwright and Sunshine Beach north to Teewah, phone Ms Winter on 5475 8865.

<http://www.noosanews.com.au/news/baby-turtles-about-to-emerge-from-nests-on-coast-b/2130692/>

Artificial anchor secures seagrass rehabilitation efforts (WA, Australia)

03 January 2014, *Science Network Western Australia*

Murdoch University marine scientists report a successful method for re-establishing the seagrass *Amphibolis antarctica* at Shoalwater Bay, off Rockingham. Dr Jennifer Verduin says it is part of a larger seagrass rehabilitation program. Dr Verduin says while viable seagrass meadows have been established in the past by replanting rhizomes of *Posidonia australis*, this has disadvantages. "We're moving more with rehabilitation into using seed and seedlings so as not to damage the donor material, the donor meadows that are healthy and growing," she says. "We should leave them as they are." Dr Verduin says *Amphibolis antarctica* can be propagated without injury.

In addition to rhizomes, it produces seedlings that germinate while still attached to the adult plant, a condition called vivipary. "We collect these seedlings without damaging any of the meadow." *Amphibolis* seedlings have a peculiar structure called a comb, which in nature allows the plant to anchor itself under a *Posidonia* rhizome while it grows and takes root.

Previous attempts to plant *Amphibolis* seedlings using various artificial anchors have been mostly unsuccessful, as coastal storms tend to dislodge them. However Dr Verduin's team has helped develop a steel wire anchor in the form of a 10-centimetre stake with a spiral at the head, in which the *Amphibolis* seedling is placed. Seedlings planted in this way have been found to have a survival rate of 29.4 per cent after one year, and plants that survive for that long remain for an further two years, eventually attaining a mean shoot length of almost half a metre. The steel wire then rusts away and disappears.

<http://www.sciencewa.net.au/topics/environment-a-conservation/item/2531-artificial-anchor-secures-seagrass-rehabilitation-efforts.html>

GALLERY

Wet Tropics, Qld (Australia): 01-02 January 2014 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Yule Point: 01 January 2014
Green Island: 02 January 2014

Moreton Bay, Qld (Australia): 13 -14 December 2013 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Wellington Point: 13 December 2013
Wynnum: 14 December 2013

CONFERENCES

The 11th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW11) (China, 7-10 November 2014)

Declining seagrasses in a changing world.

The International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW) gives a good chance for the scientists working on various aspects of seagrass ecosystems to come together and discuss their latest achievements. The ISBW11 will be held from 7-10 November 2014 at Sanya city, Hainan Province, China, organized by South China Sea Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. ISBW11 convenor is Dr Xiaoping Haung.

The following symposia themes were chosen for ISBW11:

- 1) Key Ecological Processes;
- 2) Ecosystem Vulnerability and Resilience;
- 3) Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services;
- 4) Management and Restoration.

Important dates:

22 March 2014 - Opening of registration on the web site
30 May 2014 - Opening of online payment
30 May 2014 - Beginning of hotel reservation
10 August 2014 - The last day of abstract submission
01 September 2014 - End of early bird payment
25 September 2014 - Notification of abstract acceptance
15 October 2014 - End of online payment
25 October 2014 - Notification of final list of participants to the ISBW11
07 November 2014 - ISBW11 begins

for more information, visit <http://isbw11.csp.escience.cn/dct/page/1>

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 32,003 views to date)

...seagrass matters blog

World Seagrass Association blog <http://wsa.seagrassonline.org/blog/>

Keep up to date on what's happening around the world from the WSA with regular updates from WSA President Dr Giuseppe Di Carlo and notes from the field by Siti Yaakub.

FROM HQ

Past E-bulletins <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#bulletin>

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

Seagrass-Watch Magazine <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.