



## SEAGRASS-WATCH E-BULLETIN

### 13 August 2007

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#### NEWS

##### ***Pesticides still pouring into reef waters (Australia)***

August 13, 2007, by Wendy Frew, The Sydney Morning Herald

Eight of the 10 main rivers flowing into Great Barrier Reef waters have breached Queensland's water quality guidelines, polluting the country's most valuable tourist attraction with increased amounts of toxic chemicals. The herbicides atrazine and diuron were present at river mouths, inshore reefs and intertidal seagrass monitoring locations, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority report said.

Monitoring over the past 12 months confirmed pesticides were "an ubiquitous contaminant" in the inshore areas of the reef, the Annual Marine Monitoring Report 2006 said. The high level of pollution could not come at a worse time because of the reef's vulnerability to rising ocean temperatures caused by climate change. By 2030, coral bleaching - the death of coral caused by the warming of the oceans - could result in a dramatic fall in the number of visitors to the reef.

The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan released by the Australian and Queensland governments in October 2003 aimed to halt and reverse the decline in the quality of water entering the reef within 10 years. The 2006 report, the second annual report so far, indicated that that may be a bigger challenge

than originally thought, noting that the use of pesticides in the reef's catchments had increased in recent years, particularly in agricultural and urban areas.

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

### **Barrier Reef needs \$300m clean-up: WWF (Australia)**

August 9, 2007 Brisbane Times

Conservationists say the federal government either invests \$300 million on a Great Barrier Reef clean-up or risks its destruction.

International conservation organisation WWF said the reef was endangered by 14 million tonnes of chemicals and mud washed from farms onto the reef each year. New research released by the University of North Carolina also showed Pacific coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, are dying faster than ever before because of climate change, disease and coastal development.

WWF Australia program leader Nick Heath called on the government to improve farming practices to avoid damaging run-off. "The federal government must act now to give the reef its best chance of avoiding future degradation," Mr Heath said. "Substantial new investment is critical to accelerate the take-up of world's best farming practice in the most polluting catchments along the Great Barrier Reef coast."

Recent analysis shows a public investment of \$300 million and a private industry co-investment of \$340 million could halve pollution on the reef, Mr Heath said. Opposition climate change spokesman Peter Garrett on Wednesday called on the government to introduce a climate change plan before the reef was irreversibly damaged.

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

### **Okinawa dugong added to 'red list' (Japan)**

August 6, 2007, The Asahi Shimbun

The Environment Ministry has added 461 species, including the "critically endangered" dugong, to its list of wild flora and fauna threatened with extinction. The additions, part of a review of the entire "red list," bring the total number of threatened species to 3,155. The dugong, a seagrass eating mammal that, in Japan, is spotted only in waters off Okinawa's main island, was assessed for the first time.

The ministry's red list classifies wildlife into several categories, including "extinct," "threatened" and "near-threatened." "Threatened" is further divided into IA (critically endangered), IB (endangered) and II (vulnerable). The new list, released Friday, added the dugong to the IA group because fewer than 50 are believed to be surviving off the Okinawa island.

The seas near Henoko point in Nago, where a new U.S. airfield is planned, contain the seagrass on which dugongs feed. Those opposed to relocating the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma functions from Ginowan in the same prefecture to Henoko say building the airfield would destroy the sea cow's feeding grounds.

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

### **SOS to save Sungai Pulai estuary (Persekutuan, Malaysia)**

August 2, 2007, New Straits Times

PONTIAN: "The marine world needs friends — don't let development destroy the Sungai Pulai estuary. I've been there and seen the seahorses." This plea from Sara Lourie of Canada echoes the feelings of more than 500 people worldwide who responded to a campaign by local environmentalists to save the estuary.

The online petition by Save Our Seahorses (SOS) action committee has collected more than 500 signatures in a bid to stop a local company from building a chemical industries estate at the estuary. SOS action committee chairman, Choo Chee Kuang said response to the petition was overwhelming and he was confident that in a couple of days, SOS would reach its target of collecting 5,000 signatures.

"We want the Department of Environment to review a Comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (CEIA) report done by a consultant for the development of the estate. SOS' petition at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/help-save-the-seahorse> since its posting on Monday evening, has seen a stream of responses from as far as Romania. The federal and state Department of Environment have remained silent on the matter.

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

## **Very Alive And Very Well: Mumford Cove's eelgrass recovery a scientific marvel (New London, CT, USA)**

August 8, 2007, by Judy Benson TheDay

Groton -- Usually the phrase "canary in the coal mine" is used to describe a danger sign, often of something going wrong in the environment. But marine scientist Jamie Vaudrey talks about a metaphoric canary that's singing loud and sweet in one of southeastern Connecticut's scenic coastal inlets on Long Island Sound, signaling not danger but an environmental success story of international significance.

This harbinger of ecosystem health — the waist-high, sinuous green blades called eelgrass — grows in abundance at the bottom of Mumford Cove, forming a perpetually swaying underwater meadow where young scallops, crabs, winter flounder, and other juvenile fish and shellfish like to live and grow, and older fish like to feed.

Such was not the case 20 years ago, and the story of how the eelgrass that had historically flourished in the cove fell into a 40-year decline, then regenerated from a few surviving shoots to its current lushness is one Vaudrey loves to tell. It's also one without parallel in the Northeast, and very rare worldwide.

*Full story & source: <http://www.theday.com/re.aspx?re=cf05c85a-9e6d-4750-8dc6-aa72eb2bbe5a>*

## **Losing paradise - Negril's beaches eroding (Kingston, Jamaica)**

August 5, 2007, Jamaica Gleaner

It's probably Jamaica's finest: sparkling, fine white sand and dazzling orange sunsets, all year long. Welcome to the beaches of Negril, one of Jamaica's most natural tourist resorts, boasting seven miles of sand along parts of the coastline of Westmoreland and Hanover. However Negril's beaches are eroding rapidly, environmentalists perceive; much of it is due to storm surges, but also significantly to human activity.

Some hotels, particularly large all-inclusives, have been guilty of removing seagrass beds from the ocean - a principal source of white sand for Negril beaches. They contribute somewhere in the region of 40 per cent of sand in Negril, studies show. "If you look at aerial photos over the last couple of years ... you will see that there is a gradual shrinking of the seagrass area in Negril and that is a part of the reason why the sand budgets have shifted," Henry explains.

While hotels aren't the only ones guilty of removing seagrass beds, NEPA has been putting in measures to ensure the seagrass remains where developments emerge on the beach. With new hotel developments, for example, while NEPA allows for some seagrass to be removed, the removal is not absolute, Henry points out. Hotels must relocate the seagrass to another section of the beach. Non-compliance constitutes a breach under the Beach Control Act.

*Full story & source: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20070805/lead/lead8.html>*

## **Lower Thu Bon River wants recognition as biosphere reserve (Hanoi, Vietnam)**

August 3, 2007, by Vu Trung, VietNamNet Bridge

The National UNESCO Committee of Vietnam has asked the central province of Quang Nam to urgently make scientific records of the lower section of the Thu Bon River to submit to UNESCO for consideration as a world biosphere reserve. This area includes the complex of Hoi An ancient town, Cu Lao Cham sea reserve, and the lower section of the Thu Bon River.

Cu Lao Cham archipelago is a tectonic plate stretching to the southeast of the granite block running from Bach Ma-Hai Van-Son Tra, which was formed more than 230 million years ago. Through changes in nature, many caves have been formed inside the granite block. This archipelago also has nearly 5,200ha of water surface, with 165ha of coral and 500ha of seagrass. Scientists have also identified 202 species of fish, four species of tiger shrimp and 84 species of mollusks living there, many of which are named in the Vietnam Red Book.

Tran Minh Ca, Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of Quang Nam province, said that Quang Nam was preparing documents to submit to the Chairman of the National UNESCO Committee.

*Full story & source: <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/tech/2007/08/725643/>*

### **Florida's Fishery Conservation Is A Model That Works (Tampa, FL, USA)**

August 3, 2007, By Frank Sargeant, The Tampa Tribune

People, wildlife and wild fish usually don't mix well. With Florida growing at 1,000 people per day for years, it would seem likely that populations of all wild creatures here would be in severe decline. But oddly enough, that's not the case, thanks to more than a quarter-century of careful fish and wildlife management, strongly backed by a conservation-minded public.

But the model has worked amazingly well here, with outdoors people among the strongest lobbyists for habitat conservation as well as effective fish and wildlife management rules.

Thanks to greatly improved sewage treatment over the last 25 years, the water is much cleaner and clarity has increased dramatically. That has resulted in a re-growth of seagrass in many areas where it had died out between 1950 and 1980. And, Tampa Bay has one of the most active shoreline restoration programs in the nation, with thousands of acres of productive wetlands being created on former industrial wastelands. The combination of cleaner water, more shoreline and increased vegetation means a vibrant food chain, which results in more and bigger fish.

*Full story & source* <http://sports.tbo.com/sports/MGBU8JTBV4F.html>

### **Fisheries Office extends po trap amnesty (Phuket, Thailand)**

August 1, 2007, Phuket Gazette

The Phuket Provincial Fisheries Office (PPFO) has given fishermen until August 28 to apply to continue using po traps, shallow-water fish traps made by stringing a net between stakes stuck in the seabed, although the traps have been outlawed since 1996.

The announcement follows the passing of the July 29 deadline set by the PPFO for all total ban on po traps unless villagers' claims that their traps do not harm sea turtles, dugongs, seagrass areas or coral can be substantiated. Fears that the traps affect the habitats of sea turtles and dugong prompted the initiative to remove them from Phuket's waters, especially after a dugong was found dead in a po trap in Pa Khlok Bay in April.

Villagers from Baan Para Moo 4 claimed that they had been using the traps to make a living for about 30 years, and that their traps had not been causing harm to the natural surroundings, including grazing dugong. K. Pairho said that there were 50 other areas in Phuket where the PPFO was aware of po traps being used.

*Full story & source:* <http://www.phuketgazette.net/news/index.asp?fromsearch=yes&id=5872>

### **Pollution in bay expected to worsen: NOAA report calls region 'most impaired' (USA)**

August 1, 2007, By Rona Kobell, Baltimore Sun

The Chesapeake Bay ranks among the most polluted estuaries in the nation, and conditions are expected to worsen as the area's population grows, according to a report released yesterday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The study looked at pollution from nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, in five regions in the country and concluded that the Mid-Atlantic region, which stretches from Cape Cod to the Chesapeake, was the most impaired. More than one-third of its estuaries register more pollution now than they did in the 1990s.

The bright spot in the research was Tampa Bay, which lost half its underwater grasses between the 1950s and the 1980s but has made a significant turnaround in recent years, according Suzanne Bricker, the study's lead author. Bricker said Tampa Bay officials pushed for upgrades at wastewater treatment plants and regulated storm water flowing into the bay, resulting in the highest sea grass acreage now since 1950.

*Full story & source:* <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-md.bay01aug01,0,5011736.story>

### **Imbalance in nutrients threatens coastal areas (USA)**

August 01, 2007, by Brandon Parker, Sun Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON --Environmental officials warn that too much nourishment where freshwater rivers merge with saltwater seas is endangering recreational fishing and marine life habitats. Human-related activities like the burning of fossil fuels and runoff of fertilizer have contributed to a moderate to high imbalance of

nutrients in 65 percent of the nation's major estuaries, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Tuesday.

Eutrophication, caused by an excess of nutrients in the water, can result in less dissolved oxygen and loss of seagrass, and has become a global problem in the last two decades, NOAA said. And officials said people should not brush off these findings as just another effort to reduce America's reliance on non-renewable energy sources.

"People should care because (eutrophication) means water that turns green, red or brown, beaches that are closed and blooms of algae that can cause harm to human health," said Vice Adm. Conrad Lautenbacher, a NOAA administrator. "It also means the loss of fish, the loss of recreation and, basically, the loss of the quality of life of our environment along the Coast." NOAA's recommended solutions include more frequent monitoring of the nation's estuaries via remote sensing devices and establishing firm guidelines to ensure nutrient concentrations don't reach dangerous levels.

*Full story & source: <http://www.sunherald.com/201/story/110599.html>*

### **"Super Suckers" Slurp Invasive Algae Off Reefs (Washington, DC, USA)**

July 30, 2007, by Scott Norris, National Geographic News

In the battle against an exotic seaweed, biologists are employing a rather unusual solution: underwater vacuum cleaners. The cleaners—called Super Suckers—suck up tons of gorilla ogo, invasive algae that are killing coral reefs, smothering sea grass beds, and fouling beaches in Hawaii.

Since 2006 the original Super Sucker, a barge-mounted device, has been operating in Kaneohe Bay, on the island of Oahu, where the seaweed invasion is particularly severe. At a recent scientific conference in Japan, biologists announced the arrival of "Super Sucker Junior," a smaller and more versatile unit that can operate in shallower waters and be easily transported between islands.

In Hawaii and elsewhere, scientists have noticed high-diversity coral communities shift to algae-dominated reefs with greatly reduced species diversity. The problem posed by gorilla ogo and other invasive algae in Hawaii has been growing in magnitude for a number of years, experts say, and now has become dire.

*Full story & source: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/07/070730-super-sucker.html>*

### **Research Needed on Imperiled Coral Ecosystems (Reston, VA, USA)**

July 30 2007, United States Geological Survey (press release)

Coral ecosystems are being imperiled at regional to global scales by over fishing, climate change, disease, and exposure to excess sediments, nutrients and contaminants. Scientists believe that recent changes in reef systems world-wide are unprecedented, according to a report released by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) that summarizes these threats and outlines important research actions needed over the next five years to more accurately forecast future conditions and to better understand and manage change.

"Coral ecosystems contribute an estimated \$30 billion to the global economy, but they are being transformed rapidly by a combination of local, regional, and global stressors," said Gary Brewer, USGS Eastern Region Ocean Science Coordinator. "The USGS has developed a robust research plan that addresses the threats that coral ecosystems are facing," said Brewer.

Coral ecosystems include not only reefs, but interdependent seagrass and mangrove habitats. They are geological and biological complexes composed of hundreds to thousands of interacting species. The essential goods and services they provide include sources of food, essential habitat for fisheries and protected species, biodiversity, protection of coastlines from wave damage and erosion, recreation, and cultural values for island nations and communities.

*Full story & source: <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1713>*

## **GALLERY**

**Bushland Beach, Townsville (Qld) : 28 July 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

## TRAINING WORKSHOPS

### **Broome, Western Australia, September 1st - 2nd 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

*Location:* Department of Environment and Conservation, 111 Herbert Street, Broome

*Participants:* Environs Kimberley & Kimberley Land Council

*Sponsors:* Environs Kimberley, Kimberley Land Council & Seagrass-Watch HQ

*Contact:* Danielle Bain (08 9192 7741 or 0414 841 519 or email [dans\\_al@westnet.com.au](mailto:dans_al@westnet.com.au))

*Registration:* <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

## PUBLICATIONS

### **Marine Ecology Group publications** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/meg.html>

Seagrass assessment and monitoring reports/publications by the Marine Ecology Group are now available. The Marine Ecology Group, based at the Northern Fisheries Centre, Cairns (Australia) undertakes pure and applied research and is recognised as a leading advisor on seagrasses, mangroves and coastal management in northeastern Queensland and the western Pacific. The group has subprograms for marine plant ecology, ports and shipping research, introduced marine pests and strategic fisheries assessment. The remaining back catalogue of publications from the group will be uploaded in the near future.

## FROM HQ

### **NEW Giveaways - Seagrass-Watch bookmarks** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html#GIVE1>

*The 13 new bookmarks feature Seagrass-Watch sites, seagrass species, marine life photographs by Seagrass-Watch HQ and Ria Tan (Wild Singapore). To make your choice of bookmark(s) from the 33 available, download the SELECTION PDF, note the number of your selected bookmark(s), and send your request (including mailing details) to [hq@seagrasswatch.org](mailto:hq@seagrasswatch.org).*

### **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>

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Seagrass Biology (Volume 2 only)
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 29 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (hardcopy)

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

### **Seagrass-Watch News Issue 29** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

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

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