



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

28 August 2008

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. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

Happy Birthday Seagrass-Watch!

March 2008 marked Seagrass-Watch's 10th year. On behalf of Seagrass-Watch HQ we would like to say thank you for your support.

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Please note: links to sources were active on date of publication. Some sources remove links periodically.

NEWS

Muddy Fay runoff flows to the Gulf of Mexico (Fort Myers,FL,USA)

26 August 2008, The News-Press

Dark brown water from the Caloosahatchee River stains the Gulf of Mexico like chocolate syrup spilled onto a green floor — a parting shot from Tropical Storm Fay.

When Fay blustered through Southwest Florida on Aug. 19, it poured as much as 12 inches of rain onto Lee County, 14 inches onto Hendry County and 15 onto Glades County. All that rain was good for an area parched by a two-year drought, but it also created a lot of runoff that has muddied the Caloosahatchee and turned the river almost fully fresh as far downstream as Shell Point in south Fort Myers. In May, the salinity at Shell Point was more than 35 parts per thousand; at 3 p.m. Monday, it was 1.26 ppt. Salinity levels in the river can range from pure fresh water to greater than 35 ppt.

“Obviously, the turbidity is going to be high, and we expect seagrasses to be impacted,” said Aswani Voley, chairman of Florida Gulf Coast University's Department of Marine and Ecological Sciences. “Fresh water will also be a factor: It depends on how long the fresh water stays in the system. Fay's other possible effects are algal blooms caused by excess nutrients in the system.

Full story and source <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080826/GREEN/80825112/1075>

DEP Receives \$2.57 Million Grant for Florida Coasts (Glen Saint Mary,FL,USA)

25 August 2008, North Florida NewsDaily

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been awarded a \$2.57 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to continue and increase protection for Florida's coastal resources and to further the state's work in revitalizing coastal communities.

"The help of federal grant funding means that Florida can continue our commitment to restore marine habitat and safeguard vital coastal areas," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "By working with other agencies as well as local governments and nonprofit organizations, we can protect the sandy beaches and coastal communities that attract millions of visitors every year and provide an outstanding quality of life for residents."

The grant will be used for a variety of state priorities including investigating Florida's offshore springs and archaeological sites; continue the agency's understanding and research with non-point source pollution such as fertilizers, oil and grease runoff from roadways, or faulty septic systems; developing plans for post-disaster redevelopment and harmful algal bloom response; restoring seagrasses; developing a statewide program for reporting seagrass status and trends; and developing a beach sediment atlas. In addition, five coastal communities and non-profit groups will receive funds to improve public access to public lands, restore coastal habitats, revitalize waterfront areas, promote shoreline stewardship and develop a maritime museum. These five subgrants, totaling almost \$200,000 and distributed by DEP to the local communities, support the larger mission of the federal grant and contribute to the state's environmental priorities.

Full story and source: http://www.northfloridaweekly.com/News/2008/0825/top_news/185.html

Minister confirms Port Botany project to get under way (Ledbury, England, UK)

20 August 2008, Dredging News Online

New South Wales' Minister for Ports & Waterways has confirmed that dredging is about to commence at Port Botany in Australia as part of the first stage of the A\$1 billion port expansion. In a statement, Ports and Waterways Minister Joe Tripodi said the dredging process would take a year.

"Dredging the bay will ensure we have the capacity to accommodate the expected doubling of trade through the port over the next 10 to 15 years," Mr Tripodi said. "A silt curtain is being installed around the area where dredging is being done to confine sediment and to protect the wider Botany Bay environment."

"Protecting the environment and reducing disruption to recreational bay users will be a priority with the entire expansion project. A second silt curtain will be installed around an area of seagrass adjacent to Foreshore Beach to ensure this natural habitat is also protected from sediment from the dredging process." Water quality monitoring has already commenced to set a baseline against which to measure turbidity or cloudiness resulting from the dredging activities.

Full story and source: <http://www.sandandgravel.com/news/article.asp?v1=11208>

Share and Enjoy [?] (Vero Beach,FL,USA)

19 August 2008, Vero Beach Press-Journal (subscription)

The value of enjoying the warm breezes along the Indian River Lagoon in the dead of winter may be priceless, but when it comes to getting money to protect the waterway it helps to have some hard dollars and cents to demonstrate its worth. That's what officials with the St. Johns River Water Management District hope to do with a study done for the organization that tags the annual economic value of the waterway flowing through Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, Brevard and Volusia counties at \$3.725 billion.

That number is about five times the value put on the lagoon a dozen years earlier, although some of the economic factors were looked at differently in the latest study. The number includes annual recreational expenditures of \$1.3 billion spent by residents and visitors to the lagoon — from buying boats to dock fees — as well as \$762 million more they would be willing to pay to enjoy recreational activities on the estuary.

Troy Rice, director of the district's Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program, said the information can be used when trying to secure money for projects such as muck removal and reducing the amount of fresh water flowing into the waterway. Rice said there is a misconception that the quality of the lagoon has deteriorated, but "overall the lagoon is in pretty good shape." The amount of sea grass in the lagoon, for instance, is equal to what it was in the 1940s, he said.

Full story and source: <http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2008/aug/19/30gtlagoons-impact-on-economy-about-4b/>

Restoring Alabama's coast (Washington,DC,USA)

18 August 2008, EurekAlert (press release)

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab have partnered to conduct extensive habitat restoration, monitoring and research along the Alabama coast. This

historic partnership will provide \$1.5 million to the DISL over the next three years for research and conservation activities. These funds are provided by a post-Hurricane Katrina fisheries restoration grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,

Under this partnership, the DISL will construct shoreline restoration projects at two sites. Both of these projects will utilize oyster shell breakwaters to protect eroding shorelines and promote the re-establishment of marsh plants and seagrasses along the shoreline.

Additionally, a seagrass restoration project in Little Lagoon adjacent to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge will be significantly expanded. This project will compare the feasibility and cost-efficacy of several seagrass planting methods. \$400,000 will be utilized to construct these projects.

Full story and source : http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-08/disl-rac081808.php

The importance of taking a vast 'snapshot' of Island's coral reefs (Hamilton, Bermuda)

21 August 2008, Royal Gazette

The Bermuda Reef Ecosystem Assessment and Mapping (BREAM) project aims to monitor the health of our reefs and the distribution of coral and fish species across the Island platform. The project is the marine part of the Bermuda Zoological Society's Bermuda Biodiversity Project, which aims to build a database of all Island species. Funded by the Department of Conservation Services with grants from other bodies such as NOAA (the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), its studies will not only help to shape fisheries management but the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The survey of Bermuda's coral reefs began several years ago, with an initiative by Dr. Annie Glasspool of the Bermuda Zoological Society and Dr. Wolfgang Sterrer, then curator of the Bermuda Natural History Museum. It has been a labour of love but now the BREAM team's diligent mapping of our waters is revealing fascinating secrets about our underwater kingdom.

The Bermuda Reef Ecosystem Assessment and Mapping (BREAM) project has not only discovered 40 potential new dive sites but has given our reefs a clean bill of health, thanks to up to seven thriving dominant species. The team have also discovered less healthy aspects to our marine environment — a dwindling shark population and a 50 percent decline in our seagrass.

"When we started our surveys in 2004, we also discovered that seagrass seemed to be dying across a lot of the outer reef. That summer we looked at 55 spots, mapping seagrass across the platform. We found out that probably half of our seagrass has disappeared in the last ten years. A local team of scientists, Dr. Sarah Manuel and Dr. Kathy Coates of Conservation Services, are currently working with a group of scientists in Florida trying to figure out why."

Full story and source : <http://www.royalgazette.com/siftology.royalgazette/Article/article.jsp?articleId=7d889333003000c§ionId=60>

Water quality is troubling issue (Salisbury, MD, USA)

18 August 2008, Delmarva Now

Chincoteague Bay is known for its rich biodiversity and picturesque sunsets over Assateague Island, Worcester and Accomack counties. It was once the site of a steady shellfish industry that sent clams and oysters to several major cities on the East Coast. During the early 20th century, because of overfishing and the permanent stabilization of the Ocean City Inlet, the shellfish population greatly decreased and has not yet recovered. Now a new problem is threatening the bay's ecosystem, as recent water quality monitoring data shows changes in the water quality index, indicating significantly degrading trends.

Beginning around 2002, water monitoring stations throughout bay began to show a large increase in nitrogen and especially phosphorous. From 2005 to 2007, the Chincoteague Bay subsequently lost about half of its 13,000 acres of seagrass, which had taken some 70 years to recover from a 1930s blight. Of the water-monitoring stations in the bay, 94 percent now report worsening water quality.

Full story and source : <http://www.delmarvanow.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080818/OPINION01/808180325/-1/newsfront2>

Tampa Bay Watch volunteers monitor bay scallops (Seminole, FL, USA)

14 August 2008, Tampa Bay Newspapers

Tierra Verde – Join 180-plus community volunteers on Saturday, Aug. 16, to snorkel through the shallow seagrass beds of Lower Tampa Bay to document the return of the elusive scallop. All indicators point to a phenomenal year for scallops in Tampa Bay as a result of 25 years of water quality improvements and habitat restoration efforts in our region.

Since early 1960's scallop populations have been sadly missing from the bay due to poor water quality and loss of seagrass habitat. As conditions in Tampa Bay improve scallops have made a tentative comeback. Tampa Bay Watch and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program have coordinated community volunteers through the Great Bay Scallop Search to help document the number of scallops in Lower Tampa Bay which helps to document the health of the Tampa Bay estuary.

Results have ranged from zero counts in the past to an all time high of 555 individual scallops found last year. Early indications are that scallop numbers continue to grow this year and are spread out over a greater area of the Bay, leading bay managers to believe that the 2008 Great Bay Scallop Search will be our best ever in Tampa Bay.

Full story and source : http://www.tbnweekly.com/editorial/outdoors/content_articles/081408_out-04.txt

Call for Articles: Seagrass-Watch News Issue 34

We are now calling for articles for Issue 34 on the status and progress of Seagrass-Watch and Seagrass activities/research in your area.

Articles are generally 200-250 words long and we would like to include any photos if available. Articles of greater length are accepted, but please let us know ASAP so we can plan the layout.

Photographs are to be sent as separate files and **not embedded** in documents, as photos and images cannot be satisfactorily extracted from word processor documents or pdfs. Graphics files should be in widely readable format, such as jpg, and preferably 300 pixels per inch (lower resolution images will be accepted if preferred resolution is not possible).

Closing date for articles for the issue is 15 September 2008. If you could send articles sooner would be much appreciated. If you plan to submit an article, please send us a confirmation email ASAP so we can allocate space in the document layout. Contact hq@seagrasswatch.org

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 33 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.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>

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28, 30, 31, 32, 33 (hardcopy)

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.