



# SEAGRASS-WATCH E-BULLETIN

## 23 September 2007

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks. [www.seagrasswatch.org](http://www.seagrasswatch.org)

### IN THIS BULLETIN

NEWS .....	1
Reserves in UAE, Qatar, Lebanon join UNESCOs MAB network (San Diego, CA, USA) .....	1
New runway to fly over Rudd's electorate (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia) .....	1
Scorched earth for water plant we might not need (Sydney, Australia).....	2
Drought reawakens ailing Southwest Florida estuaries (Naples, FL, USA) .....	2
Manatee status unlikely to change (Melbourne, FL, USA) .....	2
Judge to hear conservationists' plea to halt Okinawa base (San Francisco, CA, USA).....	3
TRAINING WORKSHOPS.....	3
Mornington Island, Gulf of Carpentaria, October 30-31 2007 .....	3
Moreton Bay, Brisbane, November 24-25th 2007 .....	3
PUBLICATIONS .....	3
Great Barrier Reef Vulnerability to Climate Change.....	3
FROM HQ.....	3
Seagrass-Watch Shop <a href="http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html">http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html</a> .....	3
Virtual Herbarium .....	3
Giveaways.....	3
Future sampling dates.....	4
Seagrass-Watch News Issue 30 .....	4
Handy Seagrass Links .....	4

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### NEWS

#### **Reserves in UAE, Qatar, Lebanon join UNESCOs MAB network (San Diego, CA, USA)**

September 21, 2007 by Muslim World News PARIS

(KUNA) -- The Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of UNESCOs Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB) has added 23 new reserves sites in 18 countries to its global network, including UAE, Qatar and Lebanon. The additions were made by the Bureau during its meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris earlier this week, where the network now numbers 529 sites in 105 countries.

Among the new sites approved by the MAB Bureau is Marawah Biosphere Reserve in the UAE, making it the first Biosphere Reserve in the country. "It is of particular importance for the protection of the marine and costal ecosystems and fragile habitats, such as seagrass beds, coral reefs and mangroves," UNESCO noted. It indicated that it is the worlds second largest population of Dugongs finds shelter and food in this site, endowing it global importance.

Full story and source: [http://www.indianmuslims.info/news/2007/sep/21/reserves\\_uae\\_qatar\\_lebanon\\_join\\_unescos\\_mab\\_network.html](http://www.indianmuslims.info/news/2007/sep/21/reserves_uae_qatar_lebanon_join_unescos_mab_network.html)

#### **New runway to fly over Rudd's electorate (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia)**

September 19, 2007 by Erik Jensen, Sydney Morning Herald

Planes will be able to fly over the seats of Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan around the clock, with the Federal Government approving the construction of a second runway that will treble passenger numbers at Brisbane International Airport. The Opposition Leader has already lost \$30,000 of his own money fighting the proposal in court. Transport Minister Mark Vaile approved the project this afternoon.

Mr Vaile defended the runway, saying it would create 2700 jobs over its eight-year construction and contribute \$17.2 billion to south-east Queensland's GDP by 2023. He said the second runway would direct

most traffic over Moreton Bay and would ultimately alleviate aircraft noise by spreading traffic across two parallel runways working in both directions.

The \$1 billion construction will displace a white-bellied sea eagle nesting population, with the Brisbane Airport Corporation being forced to construct a new nesting site and fund ecological monitoring for remnant seagrass, mangroves and saltmarsh.

*Full story and source: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/runway-to-buzz-rudd/2007/09/18/1189881490707.html>*

### **Scorched earth for water plant we might not need (Sydney, Australia)**

September 2, 2007, Hannah Edwards, Environment Reporter, Sydney Morning Herald

This is the first clear glimpse of the massive scale of the construction work for the state's \$1.76 billion water desalination plant at Kurnell. Earth works to prepare the controversial site, south of Botany Bay, have been under way for several months. The State Government commissioned the plant during the height of the drought, saying it would help solve Sydney's future drinking water shortage problems. But critics say the plant, due for completion in 2009, is no longer needed, with recent rains having raised dam levels.

Scientists and environmental groups warn that creatures in the bay will be threatened if a proposed undersea pipeline gets final approval. Jane Williamson, a Macquarie University lecturer in biological sciences, is concerned about the effect the pipeline might have on the rich diversity of marine animal and plant life. "People think of Botany Bay as a bit of a wasteland but it really isn't," Dr Williamson said. Juvenile nurseries of fish and associated fauna live in remnant patches of seagrass, she said. "Two types of seagrass occur around there - one that recovers quickly and one that takes a long time to recover. This will be fairly impacted." Dr Williamson said the area around the plant's outlet tunnel, which would be used to deposit waste water after the desalination process, could also be affected.

*Full story and source: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/scorched-earth-for-water-plant-we-might-not-need/2007/09/01/1188067429776.html>*

### **Drought reawakens ailing Southwest Florida estuaries (Naples, FL, USA)**

September 8, 2007, By Julio Ochoa, Naples Daily News

Red tide blooms have vanished, seagrass beds are coming back strong and bait fish fill the waters. What a difference a year — and a drought — makes for local estuaries.

Department of Environmental Protection scientists working for the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve noticed significant decreases in seagrass coverage a couple of years ago. The scientists monitor the same five sites in Estero Bay every year. Within a square meter, they measure the percentage of area covered by seagrass, the different types of seagrass found and the length of the blades.

The scientists still are conducting their research, but they are finding signs of improvement, especially compared to two years ago, said Stephanie Erickson, an environmental specialist for the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve.

*Full story and source: [http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/sep/08/drought\\_reawakens\\_ailing\\_southwest\\_florida\\_estuari/?breaking\\_news](http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/sep/08/drought_reawakens_ailing_southwest_florida_estuari/?breaking_news)*

### **Manatee status unlikely to change (Melbourne, FL, USA)**

September 11, 2007, by Jim Waymer, Florida Today

The chairman of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission says he plans to go along with Gov. Charlie Crist's request to delay downlisting the Florida manatee from endangered to threatened. "It's a real important issue. The manatee is the icon of conservation in Florida," said Chairman Rodney Barreto. "It's a real symbol, and you know, we've got to get it right."

"I applaud the Commission's efforts to implement a strong, thorough management plan for the Florida manatee," Crist wrote. "However, given the need for a better method to estimate the population of the Florida Manatee and the record 417 manatee deaths in 2006, I believe a more prudent course of action at this time would be to postpone consideration of the proposed change in status to this species."

Aerial surveys in recent years have spotted about 3,000 manatees statewide. Because of the Indian River Lagoon's lush seagrass, Brevard County can house as many as one-third of the state's manatee population at times.

*Full story and source: <http://www.floridatoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070911/BREAKINGNEWS/70911039>*

## **Judge to hear conservationists' plea to halt Okinawa base (San Francisco, CA, USA)**

September 17, 2007, CBS 5

A federal judge is scheduled to hear arguments in San Francisco this afternoon on a plea by conservation groups for a study of the effects of a proposed Marine Corps base on Okinawa on a rare sea mammal. A coalition of American and Japanese environmental groups contends the new air-sea facility on the Japanese island of Okinawa would disrupt seagrass beds used as habitat of the Okinawa dugong.

The mammals have been designated by the Japanese government as critically endangered and as a national monument to the Okinawan people. They are culturally revered by native Okinawans and have been celebrated as sirens or mermaids believed to give friendly warnings of tsunamis, according to the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the plaintiffs in the case. Some studies suggest there may be as few as 10 Okinawa dugong remaining in existence.

The proposed new base on Cape Henoko would replace an existing Marine Corps air station in a heavily populated area. It would have V-shaped runways extending 1,800 meters into Henoko Bay, where seagrass beds used by Okinawa dugong for feeding are located.

Full story and source: [http://cbs5.com/localwire/localnews/bcn/2007/09/17/n/HeadlineNews/OKINAWA-BASE-LAWSUIT/resources\\_bcn.html](http://cbs5.com/localwire/localnews/bcn/2007/09/17/n/HeadlineNews/OKINAWA-BASE-LAWSUIT/resources_bcn.html)

## **TRAINING WORKSHOPS**

### **Mornington Island, Gulf of Carpentaria, October 30-31 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Participants: Indigenous Land & Sea Rangers from Wellesley Islands region

Sponsor: Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation & NAILSMA

Contact: Seagrass-Watch HQ or Kelly Gardner Email: [kgardner@clcac.com.au](mailto:kgardner@clcac.com.au)

### **Moreton Bay, Brisbane, November 24-25th 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Participants: Moreton Bay Seagrass-Watch

Sponsor: SEQ Catchments, QPWS(EPA), QCC and DPI&F

Contact: Seagrass-Watch HQ

or Keira Price Email: [Keira.Price@epa.qld.gov.au](mailto:Keira.Price@epa.qld.gov.au)

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

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Great Barrier Reef Vulnerability to Climate Change** [http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#gbrmpp\\_07](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#gbrmpp_07)

Climate change is recognised as the greatest long-term threat to the Great Barrier Reef. Projections show sea and air temperatures will continue to increase, sea level is rising, the ocean is becoming more acidic, intense storms and rainfall will become more frequent and ocean currents will change.

Climate Change and the Great Barrier Reef: A Vulnerability Assessment is a peer-reviewed publication compiled as a collaboration between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and over 80 leading climate and tropical marine experts. It provides expert assessments of the vulnerability of Great Barrier Reef species, habitats and key processes to climate change and identifies possible ways to respond to the climate change challenge. Managers and scientists will find this book valuable as a basis on which future decisions can be made, as well as anyone with an interest in tropical marine ecosystems.

## **FROM HQ**

**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 30** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

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

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