



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

17 November 2009

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.

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NEWS

Coastal habitats may sequester 50 times more carbon than tropical forests by area (USA)

16 November, Mongabay.com

Highly endangered coastal habitats are incredibly effective in sequestering carbon and locking it away in soil, according to a new paper in a report by the IUCN. The paper attests that coastal habitats—such as mangroves, sea grasses, and salt marshes—sequester as much as 50 times the amount of carbon in their soil per hectare as tropical forest.

"The key difference between these coastal habitats and forests is that mangroves, seagrasses and the plants in salt marshes are extremely efficient at burying carbon in the sediment below them where it can stay for centuries or even millennia. Tropical forests are not as effective at transferring carbon into the soil below them, instead storing most carbon in the living plants and litter," explains the paper's author and Conservation International's Marine Climate Change Director, Dr. Emily Pidgeon. "But coastal ecosystems keep sequestering large amounts of carbon throughout their life cycle. Equally, the majority of carbon stays locked away in the soil rather than the plant, so only a relatively small amount is released when the plant dies."

This capacity for coastal environments to lock away carbon for thousands of years has largely been ignored in accounts of the global carbon cycle, according to the paper, even though the amount of carbon they are responsible for storing is very high.

"Not only do these ecosystems help us to remove carbon from the atmosphere, but they are also very important as an adaptation tool to help some of the world's most vulnerable people to avoid the worst impacts of climate change," writes Pidgeon. "It is imperative that we take steps to protect them immediately."

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

Related links: <http://newsblaze.com/story/20091116081332zzzz.nb/topstory.html>

Loss of Ocean Seagrass Beds Accelerating Due to Human Activity (Phoenix, AZ, USA)

14 November 2009, Natural News.com

As critical for ocean life as coral reefs but less well known, seagrass beds around the planet are also in sharp decline, according to a study conducted by researchers from Australia, Spain and the United States, and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Seagrass meadows provide important habitat and nurseries for large numbers of shellfish and fish, which in turn draws larger marine life to these areas to feed. They also help prevent coastal erosion by stabilizing sediments on the ocean bottom, and filter out many of the wastes that flow into the ocean from the land.

Yet according to the study, the rate of annual seagrass decline has leaped from 1 percent per year before 1940 to 7 percent per year today. An estimated 58 percent of all seagrass meadows around the world are currently in a state of decline. Since 1879, a full 29 percent, or 19,690 square miles, of the meadows have disappeared.

"Globally, we lose a seagrass meadow the size of a soccer field every thirty minutes," said co-author William Dennison of the University of Maryland.

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

District completes mapping project (Brooksville, FL, USA)

16 November 2009, Hernando Today

Southwest Florida Water Management District recently completed a seagrass mapping project to monitor the long-term health of seagrass beds along the Springs Coast. The project involved digitally mapping more than 525,000 acres of submerged land from the mouth of the Anclote River near Tarpon Springs to the mouth of the Withlacoochee River.

Seagrass generally grows in waters less than 14 feet deep and is an important barometer of the health of estuarine and marine waters because it requires relatively clean water to flourish. Seagrass beds shelter and support a variety of juvenile fish and other marine wildlife such as snook, red drum and scallops.

The total cost of the cooperatively funded project was \$295,680. The District's Coastal Rivers Basin Board provided \$165,680; and the remaining amount was funded by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

Full story and source: <http://www2.hernandotoday.com/content/2009/nov/16/district-completes-mapping-project/news/>

Guides OK with pole-and-troll plan to help seagrass beds on Florida Bay (USA)

15 November 2009, MiamiHerald.com

Everglades National Park's proposal for a pilot pole-and-troll zone to protect seagrass beds in Florida Bay got a boost at a public hearing last week in Key Largo. No one in the audience packed with shallow-water fishing guides objected to the proposed no-combustion zone covering 8,000 acres in Snake Bight. But several guides made suggestions for fine-tuning.

Park planners have proposed that the area bounded on the south by Tin Can Channel and transected by Snake Bight Channel be open only to boats using push poles, electric trolling motors or paddles. Adjacent Jimmie's Lake would allow boats to travel at idle speed in waters deeper than two feet. The new zone could be implemented as soon as a year from now. It was suggested by several fishing guides and conservationists during recent public hearings on the park's proposed general management plan. Park officials decided to give the pole-and-troll zone a try before implementing the long-range management plan guiding park waters for 15 to 20 years.

The public comment period for the pilot project will be open through Nov. 30. Comments can be submitted at www.nps.gov/ever by following the home page link to "Everglades National Park Planning -- Proposed Florida Bay Pole and Troll Zone."

Full story and source: <http://www.miamiherald.com/sports/other/story/1333657.html>

Related links: <http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2009/11/everglades-national-park-officials-considering-pole-and-troll-boating-zone-protect-resources4857>

Manatee zones effective Monday (Tampa, Florida, USA)

13 November 2009, Tampa Tribune

With cool weathers headed into Central Florida, boaters need to take extra precautions to avoid collisions with manatees. The Tampa Bay Manatee Awareness Coalition is reminding boaters that several slow speed zones go into effect on Sunday to protect endangered manatees that will be gathering near power plants for winter.

Based on past aerial surveys, as many as 350 sea cows are expected to spend all or part of the winter months in Tampa Bay and its tributaries. When water temperatures plunge below 68 degrees, the majority of the manatees will congregate near the Tampa Electric Company's Big Bend Power Station in Apollo Beach. Seventeen manatees have been killed this year by watercrafts in Hillsborough County. That is nearly double the deaths logged for all of 2007 and 2008, according to the coalition.

Manatees are most in danger of being hit by boats when water is less than six feet deep and seagrass - a staple in the manatee's diet - is present. The shallow flats are popular with anglers, too. So, going slow not only enhances fishing opportunities, but protects manatees, according to the coalition. Slow speed zones and exclusion zones will be in effect through March 31.

Full story and source: <http://northeast2.tbo.com/content/2009/nov/13/manatee-zones-effective-monday/>

Marine Bill will protect sea life (Bournemouth, Dorset, UK)

13 November 2009, Bournemouth Daily Echo

Studland's precious seahorse habitat deserves to become the first protected zone under the new Marine Bill. Welcoming the Act of Parliament that will create nature reserves in the sea, conservationist and diver Steve Trehwella says the seas off Studland should be properly managed.

Forty seahorses were counted last year among the eelgrass (seagrass), 20 of which were breeding. It is the only British site which is home to both spiny and short snouted seahorses, which are tagged by the Seahorse Trust. Tension has arisen between boat owners who anchor among the grass and conservationists, who say they rip up the fragile habitat. A small voluntary no-anchor zone is currently in place.

The long-awaited Marine and Coastal Access Bill will provide protection after years of neglect and over-exploitation of the seas, say conservation bodies. Seventy sites have been proposed for protection around the country, including Studland and Worbarrow Bay, home to pink sea fans and other corals, and you can cast your vote on the Marine Conservation Society website.

Full story and source: http://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/4736120.Marine_Bill_will_protect_sea_life/

Battler on the bottle (Molendinar, Queensland, Australia)

28 October 2009, Gold Coast Bulletin News

A baby dugong which was separated from its mother in the wild was flown to the Gold Coast in the back of a Qantas plane set up to transport the mammal to Sea World. The infant dugong was found by residents in the shallows of Three Mile Creek just north of Townsville, dehydrated and battle-scarred on Saturday.

Sea World Director of Marine Sciences Trevor Long said the infant was still coming to terms with the changes. The baby was also recovering from minor wounds he sustained from other dugongs after being separated from his mother.

Mr Long said Sea World had successfully raised two dugongs in the past -- Pig and Wuru -- but they were unable to be released back in the wild as they could not be taught the necessary social skills to survive. He said he was hopeful this one would make world history and be the first to be sent back out to sea. If all goes to plan, the baby will be introduced to sharks and fish and other sea life he will have to deal with in the ocean.

Full story and source: http://www.goldcoast.com.au/article/2009/10/28/152705_gold-coast-news.html

New rules will help to protect Florida's seagrass (USA)

25 October 2009, Tampa Tribune Caribbean Net News

Rules outlining a series of escalating fines for damaging grass flats in state preserves are about to be enforced, and they are likely to considerably change the way many of us run the flats in some 2 million acres of inshore waters.

Under the new regulations, anyone caught running over a grass bed within a preserve where the prop makes contact with the grass, can be fined \$50 for a first offense, \$250 for a second offense within 12 months, \$500 for a third offense and \$1,000 for a fourth within 72 months. All offenses are non-criminal.

The new rules will mean that, for the most part, anglers will have to stay in marked channels anytime they leave the deepest parts of the sound because there are vast grass flats in water only a foot or two deep. It's also some of the finest snook and redfish and trout water in Florida. State biologists say that the proper action to take if you accidentally run in grassy water where the prop is making bottom contact is to shut down, tilt up the motor, and pole, paddle or push the boat out to deeper water.

Full story and source: <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2009/oct/25/sp-under-protection/sports-outdoors/>

GALLERY

Bushland Beach (Qld, Australia): 17 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Bowen (Qld, Australia): 17 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Magnetic Island (Qld, Australia): 15 October 2009 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Sadly (for seagrass at least) the October monitoring indicated by far the lowest seagrass cover we have ever seen at this site. What recovery was occurring, was most noticeable at the landward end of the transects.

CONFERENCES

ICSED2009 (Trang, Thailand, 2 – 4 December 2009)

International Conference on Seagrass Ecology and Dugong 2009: "Rehabilitation & Sustainability"

The conference will focus on current seagrass ecology issues and sustainable small-scale seagrass fisheries. The conference will contribute to the resolution of important issues which are threatening to both humans and seagrass aquatic organisms. The attendees are expected to share a viewpoint of global seagrass management based on their own backgrounds and experience. Conference topics will include:

1. seagrass biodiversity and ecosystem functioning
2. consequences of seagrass biodiversity change
3. conservation of seagrass biodiversity and dugong
4. integrated coastal management and governance mechanisms

More information: <http://icsed2009.rmutsv.ac.th/index.html>

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, 21–25 November, 2010)

Open to all and will include invited plenary lectures and oral and poster presentations. The expected cost for WSC is US\$200 which includes registration, lunches, two dinners and a half-day field trip to the seagrass meadow in Phuket (hotel and travel are separate).

9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) (Trang, 27–30 November, 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. The expected cost for the workshop is US\$350, which includes travel to Trang from Phuket, lunches, two dinners and a full day excursion to the nearby seagrass meadow (again, hotel and travel separate).

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/>

Important Dates for the WSC and ISBW9

November 2009	Second Announcement (including themes and a preliminary programme) and Registration Opens
March 2010	Abstract Submission Deadline
June 2010	Notification of Abstract Acceptance for Oral or Poster Presentations, Updated Programme
July 2010	Registration Closes
August 2010	Final Programme Announcement
21–25 November 2010	WSC in Phuket, Southern Thailand
27–30 November 2010	ISBW-9 in Trang, Southern Thailand

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 38 <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.