



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

30 November 2010

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. You are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

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NEWS

Launch inquiry or I will name and shame (Australia)

25 November 2010, The Cairns Post

The names and addresses of people poaching dugongs in the Far North and selling the meat have been given to the State Government and police by the State Opposition. It comes amid reports that a daily flight from the Torres Strait has been arriving in Cairns with packaged dugong meat. The Cairns Post has also discovered that customers at an Innisfail hotel have allegedly been offered the illegal meat. Opposition sustainability spokesman Glen Elmes said he would name and shame those involved in the black-market trade if the Government did not act.

He said, while traditional owners had permission to hunt dugongs, he had proof that some were breaking the law. "To hunt the animals for traditional purposes is fine, but when you are poaching and onselling the meat for profit that is when it is against the law," Mr Elmes said.

Sustainability Minister Kate Jones said: "I hope there is something substantial in the information provided, so if illegal activities have taken place they can be investigated and the offenders brought to justice." Calls for a crackdown on illegal dugong killing in the Far North have been growing since the bodies of three of the endangered creatures were discovered near Cairns in April.

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

Related articles: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/11/25/3075861.htm>

<http://www.mysunshinecoast.com.au/articles/article-display/finally-mr-elmess-coughs-up-evidence-on-dugong-deaths,19573>

<http://news.ninensn.com.au/national/8169303/dugongs-poached-for-meat-oppn>

Sea grasses out to save country despite coral depletion — expert (Manila, Philippines)

22 November 2010, Manila Bulletin

A marine science expert has doused fears that marine life is running out along the depleting corals in the country's coastal areas, saying seagrasses are now out to rescue the country's marine resources. During a forum on biodiversity, Dr. Miguel Fortes of the University of the Philippines' (UP) Marine Science Institute (MSI) said while corals are indeed getting few and mangroves are being destroyed, seagrasses have come out to give hope for marine survival despite the impact of climate change.

"The coast and the people will still survive (with coastal areas abounding with seagrasses)," he said when asked if marine life would still be there even if corals and mangrove are completely lost. "Species that can thrive in mangroves, they can thrive in sea grass. ... *Alisin mo ang mangrove, alisin mo ang corals, sa sea grass pwede pa rin sila* (Mangrove and corals may be gone, but in sea grass, they can still live)," Fortes said.

He said unlike the two other marine habitats, seagrasses are hardly affected by climate change, but easily develop and reproduce underwater, except that they are less popular because they are not so attractive as corals. "It grows anywhere, practically everywhere. *Mas malaki pa yata sa coral reefs natin ngayon yan lumalabas eh* (It appears now that it covers a bigger area than the coral reefs do)," said the marine scientist who is into the study of sea grasses. In 2002, he said, the area covered by seagrasses was 978 sq. km. "Now, the area covered by seagrasses in the country is 27,282 sq.km," Fortes said.

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

Full story and source: <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/288924/sea-grasses-out-save-country-despite-coral-depletion-expert>

Traditional hunters keen to help lift turtle numbers (Australia)

22 November 2010, ABC North Qld

The Sea Turtle Foundation says it is confident turtle numbers will continue to grow, after educating traditional hunters on how to preserve the species. David Row from the Townsville-based foundation has been visiting southern communities in Papua New Guinea with tips for turtle and dugong conservation. He says hunters did not previously know a lot about the breeding cycle of marine animals. Mr Row from says the communities are eager to learn new practices to save marine animal populations.

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

Barnegat Bay research adds \$400000 EPA grant (USA)

27 November 2010, NorthJersey.com

Researchers at Ocean County College have received a \$400,000 grant to evaluate the health of Barnegat Bay's coastal marshes and how well the marshes can continue to protect coastal communities from flooding and provide vital fish habitat. The research will complement an ongoing multiyear study by a team of Rutgers University professors to develop a more robust series of measures that coastal states can use to assess the health of ocean shorelines and bays.

The Ocean County College researchers will use the new EPA grant to collect more extensive data on sediment and water quality and use it to analyze the health of Barnegat Bay's wetlands and figure out what has caused wetland degradation. The Rutgers team, meanwhile, has been tracking the health of the bay's seagrass which is a key habitat for fish and animals and an important indicator of the water system's health.

About 40 percent of the bay's shoreline has been bulkheaded, which affects species diversity and reduces the marshlands' ability to act as a pollution filter. In addition, the bays have basically lost their shellfish, killed off by explosions of algae that have flourished as a result of warmer water and the presence of nutrients flushed into the waters from lawn fertilizers and sewage plants. Larger algae, called sea lettuce, has grown so prevalent in recent summers that it has blocked sunlight and harmed the seagrass. Seagrass biomass declined 72 percent in Kennish's test areas from 2004 to June 2009.

Full story and source: http://www.northjersey.com/news/state/110898609_Barnegat_Bay_research_adds_400_000_EPA_grant.html

Expat peace group studies embattled Okinawa ecology (Japan)

27 November 2010, *The Japan Times*

At first glance, the group of 15 young Japanese and foreigners gathered together in the arrival lounge at Naha airport look like just another package tour for a week of fun on Okinawa's tropical beaches. These English teachers, interior designers and university students are taking part in a study trip organized by the group US for Okinawa to teach people about the environmental impact of American military bases on the islands. "The name US for Okinawa has two meanings," explains Emilie McGlone, the group's cofounder and international coordinator for the nongovernmental organization Peace Boat. Over the next four days, the participants will meet with a diverse range of Okinawan people — each with a different environmental horror story to share.

On the third day, the group's devotion is put to the test. McGlone wakes them up at dawn, herds them onto the bus and then leads them on a 15-minute hike through thick jungle. From a hilltop overlooking Oura Bay, local resident Takuma Higashionna talks about the dugong — a relative of the manatee — that feeds on the sea grass in the waters below. Higashionna is campaigning to establish a sanctuary in the area. He faces heavy opposition — Oura Bay is the proposed site for the relocation of U.S. Marine Air Station Futenma, and current plans call for two 1,500-meter runways to be built over the beds of sea grass.

In 2008, Higashionna sued the U.S. Department of Defense, arguing that the runway plans violate American laws protecting "natural monuments" (such as the dugong) wherever they live. Higashionna won the case, but Washington has failed to abandon the project.

Full story and source: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/f120101127a1.html>

Related articles: http://www.fpif.org/articles/the_battle_of_okinawa_2010_japan-us_relations_at_a_crossroad
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11404406>

Will Studland Bay become a no-anchoring zone (UK)

24 November 2010, *Motor Boats Monthly*

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is hosting a workshop in Poole today to discuss, among other things, whether boaters should be banned from anchoring in Studland Bay. Representatives from a range of interested parties were expected to attend the workshop, including the Seahorse Trust, Royal Yachting Association, National Trust, Natural England, Finding Sanctuary, Studland Bay Residents' Beach Association, Crown Estate and Dorset Wildlife Trust.

The workshop has alarmed local boating groups, which fear that the MMO could use a byelaw to ban anchoring in Studland Bay altogether. However, the Marine Conservation Society, which is currently conducting an online poll into whether Studland should become a marine protected area, said it is not calling for an outright ban on anchoring. A statement from the MCS said: "We can all use this area of seabed in a responsible way, ensuring protection for vulnerable species (seahorses) and habitat (seagrass), whilst rightfully enjoying the understandable pleasures of motorboating in such a beautiful location.

Full story and source: <http://www.motorboatsmonthly.co.uk/news/508145/will-studland-bay-become-a-no-anchoring-zone>

'Patches of muck' kill off local industry(Australia)

25 November 2010, *The Australian*

The fishermen who aren't sitting idle these days in Oesapa are mostly on building sites or working as ojecks, says Mustafa. Mr Mustafa, leader of the West Timor Traditional Fishermen's Alliance, works in a wood yard. He didn't bother fixing his boat for the red snapper season that opened in September and normally keeps the men of Oesapa and other West Timor fishing villages busy until late November. There's hardly anything out there, he said yesterday. The seagrass "is yellow and dead, no fish . . . there's still yellowish stuff over the corals too". "I was born here, but during 40 years of life I have never experienced anything like this, nor my parents."

Like his 4000 members and like fishermen and seaweed farmers elsewhere in West Timor and on Rote Island, Mr Mustafa blames Montara oil for the steep, synchronised declines in yields since September last year -- 60-80 per cent according to Indonesian fisheries data. There are other possible causes of collapses, especially in waters as hard-worked as those of East Nusa Tenggara province, where 22,000 registered small fishing vessels compete with hundreds of illegal foreign trawlers. Oesapa fishermen are adamant the disintegration began within weeks of them encountering large patches of brown-yellow muck "on top of the water" about 80km offshore in the Timor Sea.

The oilwell operator, PTTEP Australasia claims only small patches of weathered oil entered Indonesian waters and none reached the Indonesian coast. Last week, PTTEP said a study it commissioned from consultancy Asian Pacific ASA showed that "98.6 per cent of occurrences of hydrocarbons on surface were within Australian water". The Montara report, however, notes: "The evidence before the inquiry indicated that hydrocarbons did enter Indonesian and Timor Leste waters to a significant degree."

Full story and source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/west-timor-fishermen-have-no-catch/story-e6frg6nf-1225960441791>

Australian port expansion project gets 'final approval' (Singapore)

24 November 2010, portworld

The port of Albany is to go ahead with its port expansion project after winning final approval from the Australian government after a five year environmental assessment process.

"Receiving the State Ministerial approval for the port expansion is the final environmental approval required for the project to proceed, as Commonwealth approval has been granted earlier," said Brad Williamson, CEO of Albany Port Authority. "The approval process has been extremely rigorous and comes with stringent conditions relating to impacts on seagrass as well as monitoring requirements for water quality, contaminants and introduced marine species."

According to Williamson, the port, on the South Western coast of Australia, will continue working with local integrated iron ore mining and pellet production company Grange Resources on its pre-feasibility study of the Southdown Project before making a final investment decision.

Full story and source: http://www.portworld.com/news/i98257/Australian_port_expansion_project_gets_final_approval

The dock stops in Sanibel (USA)

22 November 2010, The News-Press

A contentious battle between Sanibel city officials, who want to preserve the island's unique nature and wildlife; and eight bayfront property owners, who want to build boat docks in a sensitive seagrass region in San Carlos Bay, might be headed to a courtroom. Attorney Steven Hartsell, who is representing the property owners, said his clients are evaluating their next step after city leaders recently voted against a proposed ordinance that would have lifted Sanibel's 17-year-old prohibition on private docks on the bayside of the island.

Although only eight property owners are asking to build a dock, the city said there are 59 parcels in the 3-mile restricted zone that could build docks if allowed. Denham said the issue challenges the city's 1976 constitution, called the Sanibel Plan, which lists 25-plus regulations aimed to preserve the island's natural environment. In 1993, the City Council added to the Sanibel Plan by placing a ban on private docks within a 3-mile area along San Carlos Bay. The ban, enacted to protect seagrasses, extends from along the waters of San Carlos Bay and Tarpon Bay west of the Sanibel Lighthouse to the end of Woodring's Point.

Full story and source: <http://www.news-press.com/article/20101122/NEWS0116/11220343/1007/NEWS0105/The-dock-stops-in-Sanibel>

Restoring Alabama's coast (USA)

21 November 2010, Examiner.com

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: the northeast shoreline of Point aux Pins and the undeveloped shoreline on the southwest side of the Boggy Point boat ramp site in Orange Beach. 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. \$1.1 million dollars will be targeted towards an unprecedented three-year intensive monitoring and research effort on the above-mentioned construction sites and two other sites already carried out by the DISL and a large-scale project planned for Little Bay.

All of the sites will be monitored for a wide range of parameters, including oyster abundance, fish and shellfish abundance, benthic macro-invertebrate abundance, water quality and chemistry, shoreline stabilization and other related parameters. This will provide the scientific data needed to determine restoration project efficacy, validate project designs and guide the design and construction of future habitat restoration and shoreline stabilization projects. Additionally, the results of this monitoring will provide cost efficiency and efficacy data for the promotion and construction of "living shoreline" alternative to bulkheads and seawall. "This is an unprecedented analysis of the real benefits of coastal restoration that will serve as a template for managers across the world," said Dr. Just Cebrian, Senior Marine Scientist, DISL and principle investigator of the endeavor. "This project will test in an unprecedented manner whether coastal restoration works and, if so, how we can get the most out of it," he concluded.

Full story and source: <http://www.examiner.com/science-news-in-birmingham/restoring-alabama-s-coast>

Fisherman fights for dredging (Australia)

12 November 2010, Tweed Daily News

A life-member of the 98-year-old Tweed Heads Amateur Fishing Club has pleaded with Tweed Shire Council to push for dredging of the Tweed River before sand build-up contributes to a major flood and kills many remaining seagrass beds.

Peter Faux told the council's community access meeting yesterday sand was holding back the river, particularly between its mouth and the Barney's Point Bridge. "It is not allowing good quality water through," he said. "We are losing our seagrass and the sand is covering over fish habitats."

Full story and source: <http://www.tweednews.com.au/story/2010/11/12/fisherman-tweed-river/>

Irwin joins push to 'save' Tin Can Bay (Australia)

10 November 2010, Sydney Morning Herald

Bob Irwin is on a mission to see a million objections lodged against proposed marina developments in a pristine bay near Australia's iconic Fraser Island. The father of the late crocodile hunter Steve Irwin is promoting an online petition that aims to gather a million signatures calling on the federal government to prevent two marina developments in Tin Can Bay.

"This is not a local issue. The area provides habitat for species that are threatened all over the world, and we need to make a stand and save some critical habitat for them," Mr Irwin told AAP on Wednesday. "Should the proposed marinas go ahead, the mangroves and the seagrass beds - home to the rare and endangered coastal dolphins, dugongs and turtles - will be gone forever. "This is the nursery for the Great Barrier Reef and the Pacific Ocean ... We shouldn't be interfering with it at all."

Mr Irwin said the Seymour Group wanted to develop a new marina at Snapper Creek, while another developer wanted to extend an existing marina at Carlo Point. He said he feared a bid to have the Cooloola region, taking in Tin Can Bay, granted World Heritage status could be compromised if federal Environment Minister Tony Burke approves the developments. He said they would require extensive dredging and suction work which would damage critical seagrass habitat for dugongs.

The Southern Sandy Straits Marine Environment Group, which is running the petition with Mr Irwin's help, said residents were also concerned about Tin Can Bay's famous dolphin population.

Full story and source: <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/irwin-joins-push-to-save-tin-can-bay-20101110-17naz.html>

Related article: <http://www.gympietimes.com.au/story/2010/10/16/mcleod-warns-on-marina-damage-joe-fraser-coast/>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine: (Issue 42)- NOW ONLINE

The latest edition of Seagrass-Watch News: The official magazine of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program are available online at: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2011

For more information: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop10>

SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

Seagrass: Pastures of the sea <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vqswj2Q> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>

Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important (11,478 views to date)

GALLERY

World Seagrass Conference, Phuket (Thailand): 24 November 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Cyrene Reef (Singapore): 07 November 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Whitsunday - Mackay (Qld, Australia): 06 - 09 October 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

FROM HQ

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Seagrass-Watch HQ is supported by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Fisheries Queensland (a service of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) and by private donations.

Seagrass-Watch E- Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.