



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

17 March 2008

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NEWS

Public wants more protection for Moreton Bay: McNamara (Queensland, Australia)

15 March 2008, ABC News

Queensland Minister for Sustainability Andrew McNamara says public support for creating new Moreton Bay Marine Park protection zones has been overwhelming.

At the moment, only 0.5 per cent is protected. Mr McNamara says in the 8,000 submissions lodged, many people asked for 30 per cent of the bay to be protected, which is double the proposed 15 per cent.

He says it is clear that Moreton Bay's important to Queenslanders. "The important thing for me, and I think for many, many people, is that this is about more than just fishing," he said. "This is about protecting the biodiversity and environmental values of the bay, the seagrass and the coral. "These things are the scientific approaches designed to protect all of the bay's biodiversity."

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

\$2.5bn for ecology (Australia)

14 March 2008, by Matthew Franklin, The Australian

Regional community authorities and farmers will have access to a share of hundreds of millions of government funding for environmental projects under a new fund.

The Rudd Government last night unveiled the \$2.25billion Caring for our Country fund, which will also deliver funding for a series of pre-election promises, including \$200million for the Great Barrier Reef, \$100million to repair and protect fragile coastal eco-systems and \$2million to fund efforts to halt the southward march of Queensland cane toads.

The new fund is the result of the amalgamation of a range of environmental and land protection programs that existed under the Howard government. These included the Natural Heritage Trust, National Landcare and the Environmental Stewardship and Working on Country programs. Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Agriculture Minister Tony Burke designed the new model to reduce administrative inefficiencies, double-dipping and alleged rorting.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

[Related links: http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/sixpronged-plan-to-replace-howards-green-scheme/2008/03/13/1205126112326.html](http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/sixpronged-plan-to-replace-howards-green-scheme/2008/03/13/1205126112326.html)

Forgotten sister of Chek Jawa gets protection (Singapore)

11 March, 2008. The New Paper

Why would Singapore, a bustling port city dependent on ships passing through, stop ships from anchoring at a secluded island off Pulau Ubin? The island, called Pulau Sekudu, looks nondescript from afar. However, it is teeming with marine wildlife because it is very close to the marine-protected area of Chek Jawa. While Chek Jawa is known for its natural gems, Sekudu, its neglected sister, has been the victim of repeated illegal fishing, camping and harvesting of marine creatures such as oysters and clams. Between July and September 2007, there were more than 20 landings on Pulau Sekudu, Mr Robert Teo said. He is the assistant director in charge of Pulau Ubin at the National Parks Board (NParks).

Since 1 Oct last year, vessels entering these wetlands have to get a permit from NParks. Recently, The New Paper went to Chek Jawa to see what could be found there and at Sekudu. Sea anemones, sand dollars, moon snails, crabs and tubeworms were spotted in the area. In addition to the marine creatures, interesting plants can be seen, such as the seashore nutmeg (a species that can no longer be found on mainland), mangrove plants and many types of seagrass.

Explaining the reason for the permit system, Mr Teo said: 'Chek Jawa Wetlands, which includes Pulau Sekudu, is an important and unique area for the conservation of Singapore's marine life. Those who are granted permits should also exercise caution when on the island. Mr Teo said: 'For applications that are approved, we seek the cooperation of permit holders to observe the Parks and Trees Act and Parks and Trees Regulations and avoid trampling on marine life while on the island.'

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Coastal pollution poses serious threat to reefs (Fiji)

10 March, 2008, Fiji Times

Increasing coastal pollution, rapid development without any environmental impact assessments and over-exploitation of resources are threats to coral reefs and coastal habitats, says interim Environment Minister Jocketani Cokanasiga.

He said those factors were compounded by poor planning and lack of environmental awareness, increased urban drift, all of which led to increased poverty. "As a result coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds and fisheries and biodiversities are declining not only in Fiji but across the Pacific region," he said. "Fiji must address the protection of reefs in a holistic way.

"Reef protection must include the protection of all habitats from the mountain and forest to lakes, rivers, streams; and from mangroves and estuaries to inshore lagoons, sea grass beds and coral reefs and offshore pelagic fisheries to the EEZs."

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Stricter laws needed to govern fishing industry (Kingston, Jamaica)

16 March 2008, Jamaica Gleaner

Stakeholders in the fishing industry are this year anticipating the introduction of new and overhauled legislation aimed at better managing the industry. According to Dr Karl Aiken, former deputy director of the Fisheries Division in the Ministry of Agriculture, the new legislation must include upgraded penalties that have strong deterrent values.

But more than penalties, he is interested in how the new legislation will encourage research and rigorous management of the nation's coastal resources, monitor the catch of marine life out of season, and tougher laws to regulate the introduction of new fishermen into the industry.

Similarly, environmentalist Peter Espeut is advocating a law that is more specific on the types of equipment that can be used by fishermen. Certain types of equipment that are not environmentally friendly ought to be banned by the new legislation, Espeut says. These include the seine, that often destroys coral and uproots sea grass - an important source to sand formation.

[Full story and source: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080316/news/news5.html](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080316/news/news5.html)

Investigators say Suncruz casino boat may have damaged seagrass (St. Petersburg,FL,USA)

March 15, 2008, Tampabay.com

State environmental officials are investigating whether the Port Richey SunCruz casino boat chewed up sensitive seagrass beds off the coast of Pasco and Hernando counties, leaving behind deep scars in the ocean bottom that are 12 feet wide and up to 3,000 feet long. "We are looking into it," state Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman Pam Vazquez said Friday. State officials said they have an aerial photo showing what appears to be the casino boat in the sea grass beds.

However, a spokeswoman for the casino ship line said DEP had not contacted the owners or notified the company of any problems. Beth Fifer, spokeswoman for Port Richey Casino Inc., said Friday that any seagrass damage must have been done by some other vessel.

Biologists who have been mapping 600,000 acres of seagrass beds off the coast discovered the damage three months ago while studying aerial photos that had been shot last year, said Keith Kolasa, senior environmental scientist for the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The biologists were surprised by the size of the gouges. More than 170,000 acres of seagrass beds around Florida's coast have been chewed up by boat propellers, but those scars are usually no more than 2 feet wide.

Full story and source: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/article418313.ece>

Oil spill devastates marine life (Cape Town,South Africa)

13 March 2008, iAfrica.com

South Korea's worst oil spill has devastated marine life, halving the number of sea plants and mollusks found off the western coast, a government report said Thursday. The oil leak also threatened the underwater food chain, endangering fish and sea birds, the environment ministry report said.

Surveys following the spill last December showed mollusk populations had plunged to 56 creatures of five species per square metre from 133 creatures of eight species as mussels were found to have been considerably contaminated by remnants of crude oil. The density of seaweeds per square metre fell 43 percent from February 2007 and *Phyllospadix iwatensis*, a seagrass, also declined 47 percent.

Hong Kong-registered supertanker Hebei Spirit spilled 10 900 tons of crude after it was rammed by a Samsung Heavy Industries barge in rough seas off Taean county on 7 December. Scores of marine farms and kilometres of beaches were devastated and three people in Taean, about 110 kilometres southwest of Seoul, killed themselves in frustration over delays in compensation.

Full story and source: <http://business.iafrica.com/worldnews/248443.htm>

Boatie casts doubt over call for slower speed limit (Australia)

13 March 2008, ABC Regional Online

A call for a four knot speed limit to be applied to the Bellinger and Kalang rivers is creating waves among some of the rivers' users. The Bellinger Environment Centre says community feedback to the Bellinger Kalang Estuary Plan has highlighted the need for the restriction to be put in place.

The centre says many residents are upset by the noise from ski and power boats, and by their impact on bank erosion and seagrass beds. But the push has been labeled as over-the-top by recreational boatie Gary Bryant, who says a four knot limit would be unworkable and bad for tourism.

"A lot of outboards are two-stroke engines and if you're just operating at idle speed all the time you have all sorts of trouble with it choking up and spark plugs fouling and whatever ... it would just be a waste of time. There's be no pleasure at all in putting these boats in the river," he said.

Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/03/13/2188099.htm?site=midnorthcoast>

Pew Institute teams with Chantecaille Cosmetics to protect global (Washington,DC,USA)

10 March 2008, EurekAlert (press release)

Unique collaboration of 2 institutions headed by women provides support of Pew Institute's initiatives through sale of 'Protected Paradise' eye and face cosmetic compacts, available exclusively at select retailers

The Pew Institute for Ocean Science is pleased to announce that Chantecaille, a luxury cosmetics company, will donate five percent of the proceeds of its gorgeous new "Protected Paradise" Face and Eyes compacts to support vital marine science research and conservation efforts. Specifically, the funds will support the Institute's Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation program, which provides a \$150,000 award to each of five ocean experts around the world annually to develop solutions to critical ocean challenges. The Fellowship is widely considered to be the Nobel Prize of marine conservation.

The Protected Paradise compacts are available for \$90 each at Neiman Marcus (neimanmarcus.com), Bergdorf Goodman, Barneys New York, and other select retailers. Each galvanized nickel compact contains brilliantly colored powders in an intricately embossed design that depicts the diverse beauty of an underwater marine ecosystem. The artfully rendered design includes: two fish, representing a host of overfished and endangered species; a school of small "forage" fish that serve as a critical food source for larger marine animals and are at risk from overfishing; a sea horse, which is being heavily exploited globally for use in aquariums and traditional medicines; coral, an integral and threatened part of the marine ecosystem that is being profoundly affected by climate change, pollution, habitat degradation and disease; and a graceful expanse of sea grass, which serves as a crucial source of shelter and nutrition for fish but is being destroyed by threats such as nutrient pollution and siltation.

Full story and source: http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-03/uomr-pit031008.php

Water quality in bay slips (St. Petersburg,FL,USA)

08 March 2008, St. Petersburg Times

The health of Old Tampa Bay depends on sea grass growth, which is affected by water quality. Water quality in Old Tampa Bay slipped a bit this past year, but the rest of the bay continued to show signs of improvement, according to a report released this week by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program.

The estuary program's scientists check the water quality in the four sections of the bay - Old Tampa Bay, Hillsborough Bay, Middle Tampa Bay and Lower Tampa Bay - to see whether the water will be clean enough to promote the natural recovery of underwater sea grasses.

Sea grasses are crucial to the health of the bay, but decades ago they declined sharply and by 1982 there were only 22,000 acres left. Since then the bay has regained 6,000 acres, with 1,300 acres gained just from 2004 to 2006. By 2006 there were 28,299 acres. Although that was far less than the estuary program's goal of 38,000 acres, it marked a milestone: the most sea grass in the bay since the 1950s.

Full story and source: http://www.sptimes.com/2008/03/08/Northpinellas/Water_quality_in_bay_.shtml

Related links: <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/mar/09/sp-water-quality-restores-seagrasses/>

http://www.sptimes.com/2008/03/05/Neighborhoodtimes/Bay_water_quality_get.shtml

Protection of Cornish sea conservation area (Northallerton,England,UK)

07 March 2008, MoreThanWaste

London: Proposals for the closure of the Fal and Helford Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in Cornwall to bottom trawling, have been published today by Defra. Fisheries Minister Jonathan Shaw took the decision to protect the SAC against the damaging effects of scallop dredging.

Defra says that the Fal and Helford SAC is designated to protect important marine habitats which are: maerl beds; eelgrass beds; sandbanks; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs, and estuaries. Underwater meadows of eelgrass, Britain's only flowering marine plant, provide shelter for crabs, anemones, young fish and seahorses. However the beds of eel grass damage easily and take years to recover leaving bare patches.

Full story and source: <http://www.morethanwaste.com/Site/Default.aspx/9B39680C8AB6CD552C2D>

'Clean bill of health' for bay amid dredge (Pakenham,Victoria,Australia)

March 2008, Australian Star

Port Phillip Bay's health remained intact after the first 25 days of dredging, State Government said yesterday. But the Bellarine Peninsula spokesperson for anti-dredge group Blue Wedges Coalition slammed the government's environmental monitoring as a sham.

Environment Protection Authority's Mick Bourke said turbidity in Port Phillip Bay was "safely" within operational guidelines and "below environmental limits". Mr Bourke said he was "satisfied" the dredging to deepen shipping channels had not damaged the bay's health. "The results show that after 25 days of dredging, turbidity remains at a safe level," he said.

Blues Wedges' Catherine Jones said she didn't trust the government. "I don't know how they can possibly say the turbidity levels are safe," she said. "The divers used to be able to see 12 metres down and now they can only see about half a metre through the water. "It's absolutely appalling." Ms Jones said the dredging had threatened the peninsula's diving and boating industries.

Dredging supporters say the project is crucial to Victoria's economy and thousands of jobs. Opponents fear it will unleash an environmental disaster on the bay and adjoining wetlands.

Full story and source: <http://www.senews.com.au/story/55880>

Related links: <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,23319784-2862,00.html>

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 32 <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 31 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 30 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 29 (hardcopy)
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Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.