

## Seagrass-Watch HQ

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**From:** Seagrass-Watch HQ [hq@seagrasswatch.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, 16 March 2007 6:17 PM  
**To:** Seagrass-Watch HQ  
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## SEAGRASS-WATCH BULLETIN

*16 March 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)

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## NEWS

### ***Moreton Bay under threat (Queensland, Australia)***

March 15, 2007, Christine Flatley, Courier Mail

It's A haven for turtles and dugongs, an angler's paradise and a natural tourism drawcard just minutes from one of Australia's major cities. But scientists are warning Brisbane's Moreton Bay may soon become a barren water wasteland. Mismanagement and overuse have led to depleted fish stocks and polluted water, and corals, seagrass beds and animals are now under threat. Scientists say it's a prime example of how the natural beauty of an area can become its downfall.

"Moreton Bay is an absolute treasure on Brisbane's doorstep, yet it's in danger of being loved to death by more and more people," director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, Dr Terry Hughes, said. "There's no other major city in the world where you can still see dugongs, whales and dolphins, but unfortunately there are fewer today than not so long ago. "A lot of people think of Moreton Bay as being a pristine region but in fact it has been quite changed by people's activities."

Dr Hughes has become a champion for the preservation of the Moreton Bay region, as he believes it will become one of the country's most important havens for marine species as global warming threatens to destroy the fragile ecosystems in the north of Australia.

Source & full story: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,21392291-3102,00.html>

### **March is Seagrass Awareness Month (Tampa,FL,USA)**

March 15, 2007, Tampa Tribune

The seventh annual Seagrass Awareness Celebration is 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 31 at Shoreline Park South, Gulf Breeze. This year's activities will include a marine-themed Easter egg hunt at 10:15 a.m., live marine life in the touch tanks, "eat a seagrass bed," seining, games, fishing, arts and crafts, boating safety, fishing, kayaking and more. Radio stations CAT Country 98.7 and Classic Country AM 1620 will broadcast.

Seagrasses are a valuable part of the marine environment and support a thriving million-dollar fishery. Most commercial and recreationally important fish, crabs and shrimp spend some time of their lives in seagrass beds. These grass beds help to filter toxins from the water, contribute to water clarity by trapping suspended sediments, provide food and shelter for juvenile fish, shrimp and crabs, provide food for manatees, green sea turtles, and migratory birds depend on seagrass beds for foraging needs! Threats to these important resources include: degraded water quality, dredge and fill projects and physical impacts from boat propellers.

In Northwest Florida, the "true" marine seagrass species include: shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*), widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*), manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*), and some species of *Halophila*. In the upper parts of the bays, another ecologically important submerged aquatic plant is tape grass, (*Vallisneria americana*).

Source & full story: <http://www.pensacolanewsjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070315/NEWS01/70315020>

### **Seagrass Waning, Study Says (Tampa,FL,USA)**

March 15, 2007, By Kevin Begos, The Tampa Tribune

TALLAHASSEE - Florida has lost 300,000 acres of critical seagrass habitat since 1995, according to a new study that soon will be published by the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. The previous figure of 2.6 million acres has dwindled to 2.3 million in the current estimate, said Paul Carlson, a research scientist at the institute.

The loss is significant because seagrass beds are important nursery areas for many species of fish and shellfish prized by commercial and recreational fishermen. Nine of the 11 main estuaries studied showed declines, Carlson said. The good news is that there were gains in Tampa Bay and Sarasota Bay, where aggressive efforts have been made to reverse decades of seagrass loss. Experts say poor water quality is the main factor in seagrass decline, but new bills in the Legislature would target another problem: boaters whose propellers gouge scars in the beds. Those scars can take years to recover.

Wednesday morning, a House committee gave unanimous approval to HB 1069, sponsored by Rep. Will Kendrick, R-Carrabelle. The bill authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to fine boaters who carelessly damage seagrass beds in aquatic preserves. A first offence would be a \$50 fine. The cost would be \$250 for a second offence within 12 months, \$500 for a third offence within 36 months and \$1,000 for fourth or subsequent offences. A companion Senate bill adds possible misdemeanour charges for repeat offences, but Kendrick says that goes too far. If the bill passes, fines would go into a trust fund to rebuild seagrass habitat. According to the Department of Environmental Protection, there are 41 aquatic preserves across the state, including 30,000 acres in Pinellas County and 8,000 acres in Hillsborough County's Cockroach Bay.

"Florida's seagrasses sustain recreational and commercial marine industries as well as critical wildlife habitat," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole, who estimated that in 2006, seagrass communities in Florida supported an estimated harvest of \$71.4 million for six seagrass-dependent commercial species of fish and shellfish.

Source & full story: <http://www.tbo.com/news/metro/MGB8Q3HKAZE.html>

### ***Green, Green Seagrass (Thursday Island, Qld, Australia)***

March 13, 2007, The Cairns Post

TAGAI State College, Thursday Island Secondary Campus is a Reef Guardian school and it is our responsibility to protect and conserve seagrass. The Seagrass-Watch program is sponsored by the Department of Primary Industries( DPI&F), Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and occurs once every school term.

There are seagrass monitoring sites on Thursday and Horn islands. Hammond Island has just recently established a site at one of their beaches. Anyone with an active interest in marine conservation can become involved. Jane Mellors from DPI in Townsville and other marine conservationists along with students, teachers, rangers and community members work together to collect seagrass data to monitor growth and report findings to the DPI&F. ....*more* <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

### ***Save our seahorses (Persekutuan, Malaysia)***

March 11, 2007, Chai Mei Ling, New Straits Times

They are faithful to their partners, the males care for their young, and they are really cuter than what their Latin name denotes. Is there any reason why seahorses should not be allowed to live on? Marine Biology lecturer Choo Chee Kuang believes they are even more faithful than humans. "When the males are pregnant, female seahorses do not flirt around," says Choo from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (formerly Kolej Universiti Sains dan Teknologi Malaysia or KUSTEM).

The survival of seahorses depends gravely on seagrass beds, just like the endangered turtle and dugong, which feed on seagrass. Seagrass has a complex root system, which can extend up to 30cm into the seabed to fix and stabilise sediments.

The seagrass at the Pulau River estuary, where Choo and his team conduct seahorse studies because of its diverse ecosystem, is located right in the middle of ongoing development. Pulau Merambong in the estuary is the single largest intertidal seagrass bed in Malaysia. "However, there are not more than 400 seahorses left in a place this vast," says Choo.

Still, Choo refuses to let his hope of saving the marine life be dimmed and is using the seahorse as an icon for marine conservation to save seagrass, which will also save other lives, through the Save Our Seahorses (SOS) organisation....*more* <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

### ***Visayas reefs to be conserved (Philippines)***

March 14, 2007, Sun Star Cebu

A company has increased its commitment for the protection of the environment by supporting a marine conservation program in the Visayas. Danajon bank, one of the rare double barrier reef formations in the world, is said to be the source of marine biodiversity in the Asia Pacific region. Located between the islands of Cebu, Bohol and Leyte, the Danajon Bank has a total coastline of 301 kilometers. It was once very rich and productive, providing marine resources to three major Central Philippines islands. Its decline commenced in the 1950s with the onset of destructive fishing, including bottom trawling and the use of dynamite and cyanide. Its coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forests are now threatened by overfishing, use of illegal fishing methods, sedimentation and near-shore development.

Chevron Philippines Inc. and Project Seahorse Foundation, an awardee of the Chevron Conservation Awards, formed a partnership to support the implementation of a program entitled, "Using Marine Protected Areas as Catalysts to Increase Community-Government-Private Sector Collaboration in Danajon Bank Conservation."

The project will create a Marine Protected Area in Caubian Island that is part of the double barrier reef formation of Danajon Bank.

Chevron will provide a grant of P3 million to Project Seahorse Foundation for the project, which aims to advance the goal of conserving and promoting the sustainable management and equitable use of the Danajon bank fisheries resources over a two-year period.

Source & full story:

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/ceb/2007/03/14/life/visayas.reefs.to.be.conserved..html>

### ***State questions plans for N. Florida resort (St. Petersburg,FL,USA)***

March 10, 2007, by Craig Pittman, St. Petersburg Times

The massive hotel and condominium resort a St. Petersburg surgeon wants to build in rural Taylor County suffered a major setback this week, drawing severe criticism from the state's growth planning agency. The Magnolia Bay Resort has generated controversy because it calls for blasting a 2-mile-long channel through the Big Bend Seagrass Aquatic Preserve, the state's largest aquatic preserve and one of the largest stretches of uninterrupted seagrass in North America.

Resort developer Treasure Island, want to build enough condominiums to add 7,000 residents to Taylor County, along with a hotel, a helicopter landing pad, a public aquarium, a marine science laboratory and 280,000 square feet of commercial space - all on 500 acres of swamp and salt marsh that the local residents call Boggy Bay. The golf course and RV park would come later.

But the development won't work without the channel - 2 miles long, 7 feet deep and 100 feet wide - to provide boaters with access to the Gulf of Mexico through the shallow, nearshore water. The developer has expressed confidence that all the seagrass along the channel's route could be transplanted.

Living in the Big Bend sea grass beds is Florida's last big, stable population of bay scallops. The scallops are so plentiful off Dekle Beach that every summer boaters from across the South swarm down to harvest them. But marine biologists say the channel and the development would destroy the scallops' habitat, disrupt the natural flow of water in the preserve and funnel in polluted stormwater runoff.

Source & full story:

[http://www.sptimes.com/2007/03/10/Tampabay/State\\_questions\\_plans.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2007/03/10/Tampabay/State_questions_plans.shtml)

### ***The Nature Conservancy Urges The Public To 'Go Green' This St. Patrick's Day***

March 6, 2007

As St. Patrick's Day approaches this year, The Nature Conservancy urges the public to think 'green' – not necessarily of shamrocks and green-dyed beer – but of how you can help save our

environment. In honor of the day, The Nature Conservancy on Long Island offers 17 things you can do to help reduce global warming, and protect and preserve our natural habitats and wildlife. More information can be found at [www.nature.org/longisland](http://www.nature.org/longisland).

1. Get to know invasive plants. Familiarize yourself with invasive plants and avoid planting them in your yard. Remove existing infestations.
2. Go native. Replace some lawn with native plants and trees that support and attract butterflies, bees and birds. A tree that shades your house also saves on energy bills.
3. Pack in, pack out on the beach. Waste attracts predators that prey on shorebirds such as endangered piping plovers.
4. Be a responsible pet owner. Don't allow your cat to roam outside where it can prey upon birds and other wildlife.
5. Support conservation. Visit The Nature Conservancy at [www.nature.org/newyork](http://www.nature.org/newyork).
6. Take a hike! Get out and enjoy our parks, preserves, forests, bays and other natural areas on Long Island.
7. Decrease chemical dependency. Limit your use of fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides - they can wind up in our drinking water and our harbors and bays.
8. Teleconference instead of flying. For office meetings, if you can telephone or videoconference, you will save time, money, and our planet from carbon emissions.
9. Turn down the heat. Heating and air conditioning draw more than half of the energy that a home uses. Turn down the heat or air conditioning when you leave the house or go to bed.
10. Dispose of toxins properly. Do not dump chemicals in sewers or on the ground.
11. Slow the flow. Consider upgrading or replacing your septic tank – especially if you live near the water.
12. **Tread lightly. Avoid boating, anchoring and shellfishing in seagrass beds.**
13. Speak out. Voice your environmental concerns to local lawmakers. Tell them you want management and restoration of our forests, wetlands, bays and parks.
14. See the light. Use compact fluorescent light bulbs. You'll save energy and money.
15. Recycle and use recycled products. Buy products made from recycled paper, glass, metal and plastic. They use less energy to manufacture than products made from completely new materials.
16. Inflate your tires. If you own a car, it will get better gas mileage when the tires are inflated properly, so it will burn less gas and save you some money.
17. Buy renewable energy. Consider adding solar panels to your home.

Source:

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/newyork/press/press2864.html>

### ***Dying seagrass has City Council's attention (Naples, FL, USA)***

March 6, 2007, by Eric Staats Naples Daily News

A city neighborhood sounding an alarm about a seagrass die-off in Outer Clam Bay got backing Monday from the Naples City Council. The city-limits line runs through Outer Clam Bay, where seagrasses and boating access have been a source of contention between Seagate to the south and Pelican Bay outside the city limits to the north. The City Council agreed to endorse a county-funded study of what has caused the die-off in the bay at the city's northern end and to seek a more active role in decisions affecting the bay.

Collier County and Pelican Bay studies since 1994 show that Outer Clam Bay has lost half of its seagrass beds, which dwindled from 10 acres to between three and four acres, according to the studies. One county report suggests sea grasses once grew in even more of the bay. The seagrass die-off has been blamed on changes in the way water flows into and out of Outer Clam Bay and on pollution in runoff from surrounding developments that trigger algae blooms that could cloud the water and keep sunlight from reaching the bottom.

Collier County commissioners voted last week to spend up to \$40,000 to hire a team led by seagrass expert Dave Tomasko to study what caused the die-off and what can be done to



reverse it. Results could be available in six months, the county's coastal zone management director Gary McAlpin said.

Source & full story:

[http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/mar/06/dying\\_sea\\_grass\\_has\\_city\\_councils\\_attention/?local\\_news](http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/mar/06/dying_sea_grass_has_city_councils_attention/?local_news)

### ***Dugong death prompts "Go Slow" message in Moreton Bay (Queensland, Australia)***

March 05, 2007, Media-NewsWire.com

The death of a large, healthy male dugong due to boat strike near Moreton Bay's Macleay Island recently has prompted a reminder from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) for boat skippers to "go slow for those below". Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr said that on Friday 16 February a member of the public reported a boat strike on a dugong after they felt the impact while travelling on a water-taxi and saw blood in the water. A dugong that washed up two days later on Macleay Island with boat strike injuries was most likely the same animal.

Ms Nelson-Carr said since the beginning of 2000, at least 13 dugong had been killed in Moreton Bay after being hit by a boat, and most had been in the southern part of the bay. "It is important for skippers to slow down in the shallower areas of the bay where the dugong feed on seagrass," she said. In 1997, QPWS introduced five "go slow" areas in critical turtle and dugong habitat within Moreton Bay Marine Park. Rangers have been working with ferry operators to reduce boat strike impacts on dugong outside those "go slow" areas.

QPWS District Manager Miles Yeates said the dugong had been tagged by a University of Queensland researcher in 2003 on Moreton Banks in the northern part of the bay, and had not been recorded again until it washed up dead on Macleay Island in the bay's south. "Ironically, the carcass with its tag has provided us the first confirmed movement of a dugong from one part of the bay to another", Mr Yeates said. "The dugong was healthy and eating seagrass at time of impact, we found fresh seagrass in its mouth." Ms Nelson-Carr said the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan review had begun and would examine the strategies currently in place to help conserve significant species such as dugong. Dugong are classed as vulnerable to extinction. The large herbivores feed on seagrass and can grow to 500kg and 3m long.....[more http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

### ***Naples council endorses county study of sea grass die-off in Outer Clam Bay (Naples, FL, USA)***

March 5, 2007, Naples Daily News

Naples City Council agreed this morning to endorse a county study of what has caused a sea grass die-off in Outer Clam Bay. Collier County intends to spend \$40,000 on the study, to be led by seagrass expert Dave Tomasko, in the wake of concern from city residents in Seagate and Naples Cay about the die-off.

The city-county line runs through the middle of Outer Clam Bay, which has become a source of contention between city neighborhoods to the south and Pelican Bay to the north. Seagate Homeowners Association President Dave Buser has blamed Pelican Bay for neglecting the sea grasses in Outer Clam Bay in favor of a mangrove restoration project farther north. County and Pelican Bay studies since 1994 show that Outer Clam Bay has lost half of its seagrass beds, which have dwindled from 10 acres to between 3 and 4 acres. Besides endorsing the county study, the City Council agreed it wanted a more active role in decisions affecting Outer Clam Bay

Source:

[http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/mar/05/naples\\_council\\_endorses\\_county\\_study\\_sea\\_grass\\_die\\_off](http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/mar/05/naples_council_endorses_county_study_sea_grass_die_off)

**Matanzas dock plan won't float (Jacksonville, FL, USA)**

March 3, 2007, by David Hunt, Florida Times-Union

ST. AUGUSTINE - From the Florida 312 bridge, a marshy section of the Matanzas River looks untouched, the water calm as a storm of emotions brews along the banks. A developer's request to build a dock here big enough to hold 100 boats has some people up in arms, concerned about everything from the seagrass to the pleasant view - an increasingly rare sight in the nearly built-out city. "I've probably gotten more comments and opinions from the public on this one than from any other issue I can remember," said Councilman George Gardner, a former mayor. "The primary concern with all the development in St. Johns County is we're losing our scenic vistas and environmental land."

Source & full story: [http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/030307/met\\_8300876.shtml](http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/030307/met_8300876.shtml)

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**PUBLICATIONS****Thursday Island training workshop proceedings: 26th February 2007** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#Proceedings>

McKenzie, LJ and Mellors, JE (2007). Seagrass-Watch: Guidelines for Torres Strait Land & Sea Rangers. Proceedings of a training workshop, Port Kennedy Association Hall, Thursday Island, Torres Strait, 26th February 2007 (DPI&F, Cairns). 36pp (1.20Mb)

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**TRAINING WORKSHOPS**

Townsville (Qld): 18th of March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

Singapore: 26th of March 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop07>

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**FROM HQ**

**Giveaways** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html#GIVE1>

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Manual for Assessing Fish Stocks on Pacific Corral Reefs (only 1 left)
- Seagrass Biology
- Bookmarks
- Stickers

**Future sampling dates** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

**Seagrass-Watch News Issue 27** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

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

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