



THE JOYS OF WATCHING GRASS GROW

Monitoring seagrass around Broome

Seagrass monitoring really does have a lot going for it: the rejuvenating stroll in the fresh ocean air across the luminous, sparkling tidal flats, the gorgeous soft pink-orange sunrises, the sense of wonder at the bizarre and beautiful fauna in our quadrats, and the delight at seeing the first patches of seagrass. There is also a great sense of satisfaction in learning the methodology, and in knowing that our efforts have made an important contribution to protecting our seagrass through a scientifically robust monitoring project.

Perhaps the joy of monitoring is why we saw record numbers of enthusiasts signing up for our recent Seagrass-Watch Community Training Workshop, designed to build the capacity of participants to monitor this precious resource. We had a fun and fascinating time learning about seagrass biology & identification, conducting laboratory exercises identifying seagrass and practising preparing seagrass press specimens. We also learned about seagrass ecology and threats, and were given a comprehensive presentation about Seagrass-Watch methodology. From 6am the next day, after a lovely breakfast of freshly baked muffins & coffee to wake us up (fast becoming a Broome Seagrass Project tradition), we walked out to the Town Beach monitoring site at Roebuck Bay for fieldwork practice, where WIN TV also turned up to capture the event

for a positive community interest story on the nightly news.

I would like to extend a special thank-you to the two ranger groups from the Peninsula who made the effort of travelling to Broome to attend the training — the KLC Bardi Jawi Rangers and the KRCI Djarindjin Rangers. I'm also grateful to Department of Environment and Conservation's Sharon Ferguson who helped organise the event, and to Seagrass-Watch scientists Len McKenzie and Rudi Yoshida, who travel the world delivering this important training, and who ran a very professional and impressive workshop for us here in Broome.

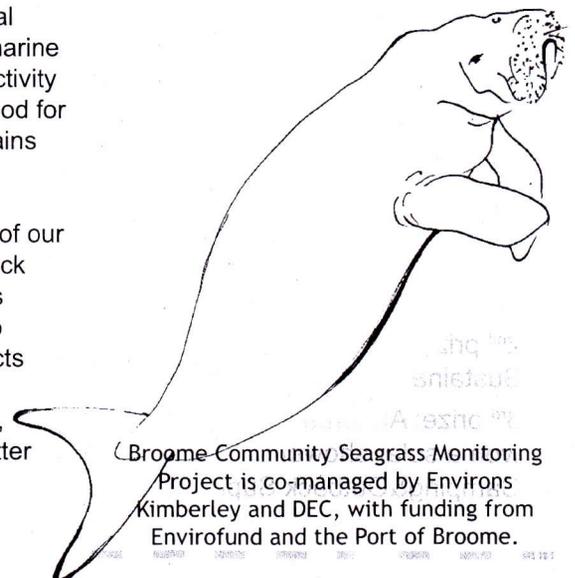
Speaking of grateful, I am delighted to announce that our Community Seagrass Monitoring Project has recently been granted another year's funding from Coastwest; the Port of Broome will also kindly continue its financial contribution. This support is particularly important in light of new scientific studies showing that seagrass loss globally is accelerating through human impacts such as coastal development, dredging and pollution. We lose a seagrass meadow the size of a football field every thirty minutes. As we all know, without seagrass our oceans are in real trouble. This humble yet vital plant directly supports 70% of marine life and is valuable to the productivity of coastal fisheries. It is a key food for turtles and dugongs, and maintains coastal water quality and clarity. Seagrass is recognised as an excellent indicator of the health of our internationally significant Roebuck Bay. While the state of seagrass globally is dire, it's heartening to know that with monitoring projects like ours supported by funders and community volunteers alike, this precious resource has a better chance of being protected and continuing to flourish.

Broome kids clean up the bay

Congratulations to Year 6 St Mary's College students, who collected marine debris from Town Beach in September, as part of international research organised by Tangaroa Blue Ocean Care Society. The students and their teacher, Mr Peter Tresise, collected the debris and analysed it. The results will be used to compare what debris appears in different oceans around the world. This will help people see what they can do to reduce rubbish entering the waterways.

One student said, 'It's amazing how much debris there is even when it looks very clean!'

well done & thanks for the great effort



Broome Community Seagrass Monitoring Project is co-managed by Environs Kimberley and DEC, with funding from Envirofund and the Port of Broome.