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- Manufacturing
- Materials
- Mining & Minerals
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Media Release

SA scientists join forces to solve seagrass mystery

Reference: 08/33

The release of a major study into the mysterious decline of Adelaide's coastal seagrasses is helping to improve the marine environment along the metropolitan coastline.

25 February 2008

The work is a testament to the collaboration of more than 60 researchers from across Australia, says Adelaide Coastal Waters Study Director Professor David Fox.

Professor Fox says the final report, released by the SA Government on Friday, provides an integrated understanding of the Adelaide coastal system from which to guide future management actions.

The work, co-ordinated by CSIRO, was initiated in 2001 to investigate the loss of more than 5000 hectares of shallow sub-tidal seagrass since the mid 1930s and 1940s.

The study involved a wide range of stakeholders and research organisations. It found that many years of near-continuous inputs of nutrient-rich, turbid and coloured water, and wastewater, have resulted in significant changes to and degradation of Adelaide's coastal marine environment.

"This study has focused on the loss of seagrass, mainly *Amphibolis* and *Posidonia*, seabed instability, and water quality degradation," Professor Fox says.

"Seagrass meadows are primary producers at the bottom of the food chain and they provide natural habitat for many species of fish, crustaceans, and other marine animals."

"Taking the seagrasses out of the system causes a 'domino effect', where the seafloor becomes less stable and hence promotes a further loss of seagrass."

The study found that water quality improvement plans over the past 10 years, coupled with reduced volumes discharged to the sea, have made a positive difference.

However, Professor Fox says large scale recovery of seagrass meadows requires continued, lasting reductions in coastal inputs, and a replanting effort.

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Download image at: [SA scientists join forces to solve seagrass mystery](#).

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Amphibolis seagrass, pictured here, is one of the main families of seagrass which is the focus of this study.

FAST FACTS

- ▶ The release of a major study into the mysterious decline of Adelaide's coastal seagrasses is helping to improve the marine environment along the metropolitan coastline
- ▶ The work is a testament to the collaboration of more than 60 researchers from across Australia
- ▶ The work, co-ordinated by CSIRO, was initiated in 2001 to investigate the loss of more than 5000 hectares of shallow sub-tidal seagrass since the mid 1930s and 1940s

PRIMARY CONTACT

David Fox
 Study director
 University of Melbourne
 Phone: 61 3 8344 7253
 Alt Phone: 04 17 937 624
 Email: david.fox@unimelb.edu.au

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MEDIA CONTACT

Ms Helen Beringen
 Communication Officer
 CSIRO Land and Water
 Phone: 61 8 8303 8452
 Alt Phone: 0418 770 140
 Fax: 61 8 8303 8550
 Email: helen.beringen@csiro.au