

2014 Regional Snapshot

Are the extent and condition of our seagrass improving?

The marine environment provides valuable resources for regional economies, supporting tourism, commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, shipping and mining. Most South Australians live near the coast and many coastal and marine systems are under pressure from human impacts.

Seagrass traps sediment, reduces wave energy and prevents coastal erosion, thereby protecting coastal infrastructure and saving millions of dollars in coastal protection strategies. It also cycles nutrients, stores carbon and provides food and shelter for numerous marine animals.

Seagrass on populated coasts of the Northern and Yorke NRM region is threatened by declining water quality due to increases in nutrients, pollutants, sediment loads and turbidity. These are caused by freshwater inputs from stormwater, treated sewage, seepage and agricultural runoff as well as industrial discharges and aquaculture. Disturbance by trawling, boat moorings and dredging are also potential threats.

The health of our seagrass relies on the management of water quality within catchments, and management of activities that cause physical disturbance.



Trend in the condition of seagrass



State target

Improve condition of coastal and marine ecosystems

Trend in condition (2010-11)

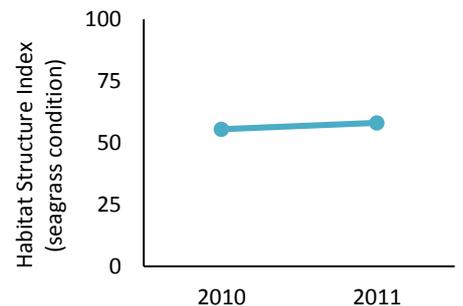
Stable

The condition of seagrass remained stable in the areas that were studied

The condition of seagrass in the Northern and Yorke NRM region was stable between 2010-11 (graph on right).

Long-term losses of seagrass have been confirmed on western Yorke Peninsula due to environmental changes (map below). An estimated 13,000 hectares of seagrass (60 per cent) was lost between 1987-94 between Port Pirie and Tickera.

This trend in seagrass loss matches those recorded worldwide, with seagrass now covering about two thirds of its former area globally.



Where we are at (2011)

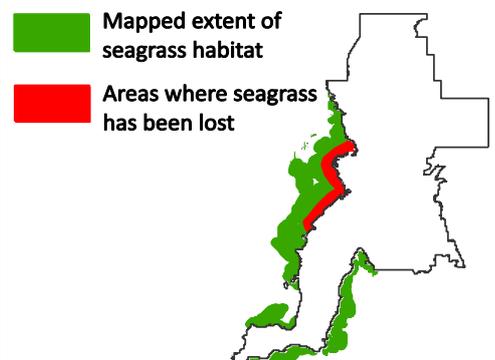
Good

Seagrass loss has occurred in some areas, but across the NRM region the extent and the condition of seagrass are not known

Seagrass loss has been recorded between Port Pirie and Tickera, where impacts from decreased water quality have been most intense. The extent of seagrass loss in other areas of the Northern and Yorke NRM region is unknown.

The Environment Protection Authority is monitoring the condition of existing seagrass in the Northern and Yorke NRM region. Seagrass was in good condition in 2011 with a score of 58 out of 100 (where 100 represents excellent habitat condition). These results were consistent with 2010 assessments.

An interagency review of seagrass research is underway and government agencies are working with the community to improve the extent and condition of seagrass.



Reliability of information



Very good

Further information: [Technical information for this report](#), [Aquatic ecosystem condition reports](#)