

2013 State Report Card

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 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.



Regional trends in the condition of seagrass



State target

Improve condition of coastal and marine ecosystems

Trend in condition (2010-11)

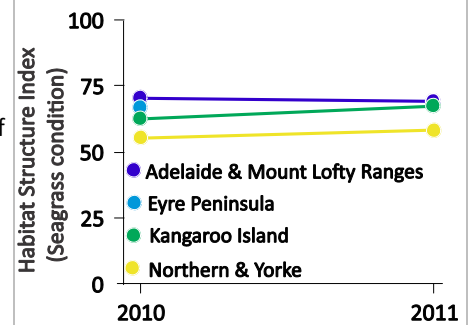
Stable

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

The condition of seagrass in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, Northern and Yorke and the Kangaroo Island NRM regions was stable between 2010-11 (graph on right). Trends in the condition of seagrass in other NRM regions are not known.

Long-term losses of seagrass have been confirmed on populated coasts where the impacts of decreased water quality are most intense. Off the Adelaide metropolitan coast, urban-based nutrients entering coastal waters caused over 5000 hectares of seagrass to be lost between 1949 and 2007. Recent mapping studies off Adelaide suggest seagrass extent may have stabilised since 2007. Large scale seagrass loss (13,000 hectares) due to environmental changes has also been recorded on western Yorke Peninsula since 1987 (map below).

Overall statewide trends in seagrass loss match those recorded worldwide, with seagrass now covering about two thirds of its former area globally.



Where we are at (2011)

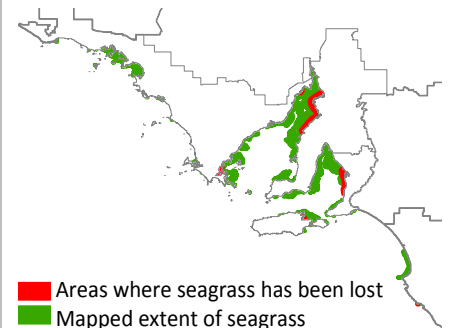
Unknown

Seagrass loss has occurred in many NRM regions, but across the State the extent and the condition of seagrass are not known

Seagrass loss has been recorded in many areas where it has been studied. The precise extent of seagrass in many NRM regions is largely unknown.

The Environment Protection Authority is monitoring the condition of existing seagrass in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, Kangaroo Island, Northern and Yorke and Eyre Peninsula NRM regions. Seagrass was in good condition in 2011 with scores ranging from 58 out of 100 (Northern and Yorke) to 69 out of 100 (Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges) (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



Good

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

