Seagrass

Cover within sampling sites

SA trend and condition report card 2020

STATEWIDE

Trend Stable

Condition Poor

Reliability Very good

Trend

The statewide trend in seagrass cover within sampling sites is stable.

In this assessment, 'seagrass' refers to the cover of two seagrass species within sites measured periodically by the Environment Protection Authority.

The statewide trend in seagrass cover within sampling sites was stable between 2009 and 2019. Regional trends were getting better in one region (Green Adelaide [GA]), stable in two regions (Eyre Peninsula [EP], and Northern and Yorke [NY]), getting worse in one region (Kangaroo Island [KI]) and unknown in three regions (Hills and Fleurieu [HF], South Australian Arid Lands [SAAL] and Limestone Coast [LC]). Seagrass does not grow in the other two regions (top figure).

Loss of seagrass on populated coasts before 2007 was mainly caused by decreased water quality.

Large-scale seagrass loss due to low tides and extreme temperatures has also been recorded on western Yorke Peninsula since 1987.

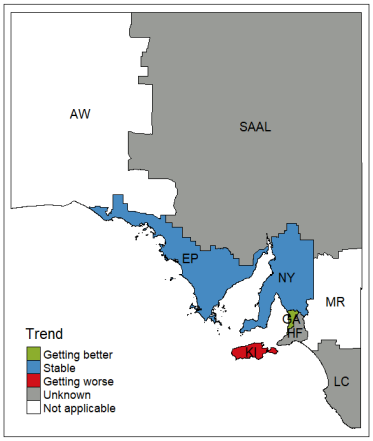
Condition

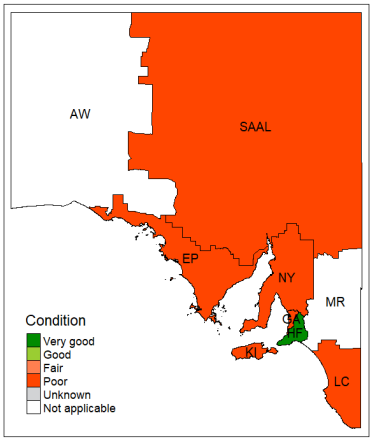
The statewide condition of seagrass cover within sampling sites is poor.

Across South Australia, seagrass cover within sampling sites was estimated to be 25%. At the regional level, estimates are 55% in HF (very good), 24% in EP (poor), 12% in KI (poor), 34% in NY (poor), 3% in SAAL (poor), 21% in LC (poor) and 22% in GA (poor) (bottom figure

The historic cover of seagrass in many landscape regions is largely unknown.

Seagrass cover is getting better in some areas and worse in others, in response to local catchment conditions.





Why is seagrass important?

Seagrass traps sediments, reduces wave energy and prevents coastal erosion, thereby protecting coastal infrastructure. Seagrass also cycles nutrients, stores carbon, and provides food and shelter for marine animals.

What are the pressures?

Seagrass is primarily threatened by poor water quality, including increased nutrients, sediment loads and turbidity.

Poor water quality is caused by stormwater, treated sewage and agricultural run-off, as well as industrial discharges and aquaculture.

Disturbance by trawling, boat moorings and dredging can also affect seagrass.

What is being done?

Marine parks and native vegetation legislation provide protection for seagrass from development, clearing and damage.

Implementation of the Adelaide Water Quality Improvement Plan is improving water quality for seagrass by reducing nutrient and sediment inputs to Adelaide's coastal waters.

For further information, see Technical information