

Media Release
31 July 2006

CSIRO report shows healthy seagrasses

The CSIRO has completed their second report into seagrasses in and around the Geraldton Port, showing healthy recovery in both seagrass growth and coverage since completion of the Port Enhancement Project (PEP).

The report "Post-dredging Recovery of Seagrass in the Geraldton Region" was based on field surveys and remote sensing undertaken in February 2006. 27 sites in Geraldton as well as Greenough, Port Denison and Jurien were tested. The same tests were carried out on these sites in February 2005 so comparisons can now be made on seagrass recovery.

Geraldton Port Authority Environmental Officer Michael Mulligan said the results were consistent with the predictions made prior to the PEP.

"The report shows that seagrass directly affected by the dredging process is now as healthy as any of the seagrass in our reference sites along the coast," Mr Mulligan said.

"This health is evidenced by factors like the number of leaves and the density and height of new shoots on the seagrass.

"The report also shows a steady increase in the overall coverage of seagrass on the ocean floor. The 2005 data showed that the coverage of seagrasses was at about 60% of what it had been prior to dredging. That figure is now up to 77% and we expect that to continue to increase."

Mr Mulligan said the same sites would be tested in February 2007 as part of the GPA's ongoing commitment to seagrass research.

"In addition to this research, the GPA has committed a further \$270,000 to research seagrass in Jurien Bay in conjunction with the Strategic Research Fund for the Marine Environment and Edith Cowan University," he said.

"Both these projects are providing vital information that is attracting interest from port operations throughout the world."

Ends...

For more information, please contact Natalie Nelmes on 9923 9990.