



**11 September 2000:**

## **Seagrass Thriving At Lake's Northern End**

Studies show that the health of seagrass meadows in Lake Macquarie is improving - at the northern end at least. Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator, Jeff Jansson, announced that recent monitoring found that the density of seagrasses at the northern end of Lake Macquarie had increased over the last fifteen years. "It is great news for the Lake that the seagrasses are on the improve. Seagrass meadows are considered a key indicator to the health of the Lake environment and they provide valuable habitat for juvenile fish," Jeff Jansson said. "The seagrasses have grown more effectively in recent times due to increased clarity in the water. Water clarity is effected by rainfall which is seasonal, but improvements in erosion and other environmental controls have also played an important part in the transformation," said Jeff. However, he warned that the monitoring results should not cause a false sense of security for the long-term health of the Lake. "The Lake ecosystem is finely balanced. While some improvements are welcome, there is also concern that increased nutrients are influencing the growth and this raises the risk associated with nutrient enrichment. If the Lake becomes too nutrient rich, we then face the serious problems associated with excessive seagrass and algae." The monitoring results coincide with the launch of the second brochure in the community education series launched by the Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator. The brochure and poster discuss the issues effecting the health of seagrasses in Lake Macquarie. They also provide suggestions on ways in which people can help keep seagrass meadows healthy. "Seagrasses are a kind of natural barometer for the health of the Lake. If the Lake ecosystem is unbalanced, the seagrasses will react to reflect that," said Jeff. Jeff Jansson said that stormwater run-off was one of the main problems that contributed to an unhealthy habitat for seagrasses. "People can start improving the process at home. The old messages of keeping grass clippings and detergents away from stormwater drains are still important. When these things enter the Lake with stormwater, the Lake water quality is effected and light penetration is limited. This makes it much harder for the seagrass to grow," he said. "Another more obvious problem concerns the anchoring of boats in near shoreline areas. Some boat anchors can actually uproot seagrasses. We encourage people to try and anchor their vessels away from seagrass beds where possible," Jeff Jansson said. The brochures are available at Lake Macquarie Council and public library facilities. Discussion posters will also be distributed through community groups and schools.

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